CHAPTER III

ASAF KHAN AND THE REBELLION OF KHURRAM (1622-24) AND MAHABAT KHAN (1627)

This chapter has been divided into two, dealing with two different rebellions rebellion of Khurram (1622-24) and rebellion of Mahabat Khan (1627). If we carefully study there two rebellions, we find that both the rebellions happened, one after another, on the question of future successor. Majority of the contemporary accounts as well as the modern scholars agree with the view that Nur Jahan was responsible for these revolts of Khurram and Mahabat Khan. She wanted to place on the throne her son-in-law, Prince Shahriyar so that she could rule the Empire in future without any hindrance.¹ Her ambition increased with every passing day due to the deteriorating health of Jahangir. Hence, she decided to eliminate all the expected rivals to the throne. The first and most-formidable challenge before her was Prince Khurram. On account of his long association with Prince Parvez in course of the suppression of the revolt of Prince Khurram, Mahabat Khan had established great influence on Prince Parvez.² Nur Jahan, who was trying to eliminate all

¹According to Manucci, Asaf Khan, Nur Jahan and few court members dislike Mahabat Khan and wanted him to be executed by Emperor. Storio Do Magor, vol. 1, p.164.
²Beni Prasad, p. 337.
the possible rivals to the throne, now turned her attention towards Prince Parvez and his staunch supporter Mahabat Khan. She was well aware that the support of Mahabat Khan to Prince Parvez, who after the revolt of Khurram had become a strong contender to the throne, in the time of a war of succession, would prove very decisive. Besides, after the suppression of the revolt of Khurram, Mahabat Khan gained fame and prestige and firmly established his claim for being the most trustworthy and capable general of the Mughal Empire such a strong position of Mahabat Khan was taken by Nur Jahan as harmful to her future plan.3

It seems that Nur Jahan was worried about the support of Mahabat Khan to her candidate Prince Shahriyar because of the fact that Mahabat Khan had been critical to her position and power. This is borne out from Intikhab-i Jahangir Shahi which states that Mahabat was not in favour of entrusting vast power to a woman like Nur Jahan and wanted that the Emperor should maintain his dignity by yielding absolute power in his hands.

Asaf khan supported his son-in-law Khurram throughout and Nur Jahan remained a supporter of the cause of Shahriyar. The revolt of Prince Khurram placed his father-in-law, Asaf Khan in great dilemma. The open support of Asaf Khan to his son-in-law would ultimately ruin his position at the court. Keeping in mind the adverse consequences he decided to support Khurram secretly. Because of this Asaf Khan throughout the period of revolt did not extend any kind of help openly. After the rebel was suppressed and forced to

3Dutch Chronicle, pp. 96-97.
submit, Asaf Khan diverted his full attention towards the strongest enemy of Prince Khurram who was Mahabat Khan. Because of this, shortly after the revolt, Asaf Khan very wisely succeeded in impressing upon Jahangir about the arrogance of Mahabat Khan. Many charges were levelled against Mahabat Khan and as a consequence of which he was asked to present himself at the court. He also succeeded in separating Mahabat Khan from making union with Prince Pervez who might pose strong threat to Prince Khurram in the contest to the throne. By doing so Asaf Khan removed the strong challenges which could be expected to surface during the war of succession in near future.

**Role of Asaf Khan during the period of Khurram’s Revolt**

Prince Khusrau, the eldest son of Emperor Jahangir, was imprisoned. Prince Parvez had failed in his various campaigns. Now the choice of Emperor entirely fell on Prince Khurram. It is true that in due course Prince Khurram proved himself as the most worthy contender for the throne. At the same time Jahangir also wanted to set the impression among the nobles and the people of the Mughal Empire that Prince Khurram would succeed him. For this reason Jahangir not only awarded him the little of ‘Shahjahan’ and promoted to the exceptional high rank of 30,000/20,000 but also granted the *jagir* of Hissar Firoza which was supposed to be a *jagir* generally assigned to the most favorite son of the Emperor.4

---

4*Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, pp. 63, 195; *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri*, vol. 3, p. 547; *Ma’ṣir-i Jahangiri*, pp. 249-52; *Muntakhab-ul Lubab*, vol. I, p. 293; according to Khafi Khan, Jahangir at that time nominated Shahjahan as his heir apparent.
From the remarks of Farid Bhakkari it clearly emerges that the death of
Khusrau in January, 1622 proved a turning point for Nur Jahan. From this time
onwards Nur Jahan, a power-loving-lady started preparing ground for placing
on the throne a candidate of her own choice who would represent the Mughal
Empire on her behalf. The choice of Nur Jahan could not fall on Prince
Khurram because of the fact that he was too a highly ambitious Prince and
according to Zakhirat-ul Khawanin, Nur Jahan had realized from the earlier
experiences that the Prince under discussion would not share the power with
her. In this condition, her own son in law, Prince Shahriyar was regarded as the
best and most suitable candidate for the throne. To execute her plan, she started
patronizing Prince Shahriyar by marrying her daughter Ladli Begum to him
and making all efforts to defame and weaken Prince Khurram and create a rift
between him and his father Jahangir.5

When all these manipulations related to the accession in future were in
progress the ruler of Iran, Shah Abbas Safavi invaded Qandahar in 1622.6 To
have an edge over this crisis Jahangir summoned his son, Prince Khurram who
was the best commander of the time to come to the court from Burhanpur and
to lead the army against the Persian invader.7 As Prince Khurram had become

5Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, p. 320; Zakhirat-ul Khawanin, sec. 1, p. 19; Maa’sir-ul Umara,

6Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, pp. 343-45; Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri, vol. 3, pp. 579, 80; Maa’sir-i
Jahangiri, p. 346; Muntakhab-ul Lubab, vol. 1, p. 327; Zakhirat-ul Khawanin, sec. I,
p. 19; English Factories in India, (1618-21) p. 333 (1622-23) p. 991; Dutch
Chronicle, p. 55

7Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, pp. 343-45; Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri, vol. 3, pp. 579-80; Maa’sir-i
fully acquitted with the plan of Nur Jahan he also decided to make his position secure. The Prince realized that Nur Jahan wanted to send him to Qandahar because it was located far from the court and also because the struggle would cover a quite long period. Because of this suspicion and fear Prince Khurram requested his father to grant him the *jagir* of Dholpur, a request which was hardly to be taken for consideration. It appears that, in true sense, Prince Khurram did not want to leave the Deccan and so he placed such demands before Jahangir. Unfortunately before the petition sent by Prince Khurram reached the Emperor the *jagir* of Dholpur had already been assigned to Shahriyar by Jahangir on the suggestion of Nur Jahan.  

It led to fight between the forces of Prince Khurram and Prince Shahriyar as both of them claimed the *jagir* of Dholpur belonging to them. This type of arrogance displayed by Prince Khurram very much annoyed Jahangir. Thus Nur Jahan succeeded in creating enmity between father and son. Prince Khurram tried to explain his stand by sending Afzal Khan to the Emperor with the objections that the emperor should not be totally dependent on Nur Jahan’s wisdom and that he should take decision independently and without any interference. The representative of the Prince, Afzal Khan was not allowed by Nur Jahan to

---

8 *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 345; *Maa’sir-i Jahangiri*, pp. 247-48; *Amal-i Salih*, vol. 1, pp. 166-68; *Badshahnama, Qazvini*, pp. 197-98; *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, sec. 1, p. 19  
pacify the action of Khurram. The Emperor also refused to meet him.\textsuperscript{10} In relation to the refusal of Prince Khurram to lead the expedition to Qandahar and the appointment of his own officers in Dholpur without the prior permission of the Emperor, the jagir of Hissar Firoza and Doab held by Khurram was assigned to Prince Shahriyar who was now supposed to lead the Qandahar campaign. Now Prince Khurram was ordered to take the charge of Malwa and Gujarat and to settle the affairs of Deccan. He was also instructed to send back the royal officers to the court. The assignment of the jagir of Hissar Firoza and the Doab to Shahriyar was a clear indication that Nur Jahan was openly preferring and patronizing Prince Shahriyar as heir-apparent against Prince Khurram.\textsuperscript{11}

It is evident from different sources that Emperor Jahangir was being guided to a larger extent by Nur Jahan at this time. As mentioned above, Prince Khurram was not prepared to act upon the guidelines of Nur Jahan, he neither went to take the charge of new assignments nor sent the Mughal officers to the court. At this juncture there were two options left before the Prince. The first was to bow before Nur Jahan, and the second one was to raise the banner of revolt. It would not be wrong to say that Prince Khurram overestimated his power and position and because of this he proceeded from Burhanpur to Agra\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Tuzuk-i Jahangiri}, pp. 353-54; \textit{Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri}, vol. 3, p. 582.
with a large army on the plea that he was coming to the court to meet the Emperor and to prove himself as innocent.\textsuperscript{13} This was not to be taken as a normal visit to the court at Delhi by the Prince, but was to be regarded as an open rebellion.\textsuperscript{14} Jahangir in his \textit{Memoirs} mentions that the main reason to move towards Agra by Prince Khurram was not to meet his father but to seize the royal treasure which was being carried on from Agra to Delhi at this juncture. By bringing the treasure at his disposal Prince Khurram wanted to strengthen his position.\textsuperscript{15} A \textit{Contemporary Dutch Chronicle of Moghol India}, gives a different story. According to it, Asaf Khan informed Shahjahan about the treasure. He wrote to him that as soon as he left Agra with the treasure, the Prince should rapidly follow him in the region between Agra and Delhi, and he would hand over the treasure to him. The plan was very pleasing and acceptable to the Prince who hoped that through this means he would successfully carry out his intention, which was rather this is improbable. Asaf Khan, though he was shahjahan’s father-in-law, apparently remained loyal to Jahangir.\textsuperscript{16} The rebellious activities of Prince Khurram were taken very seriously by the Emperor. He sent orders to different nobles and Princes to suppress the revolt.\textsuperscript{17} Mahabat Khan who had some misunderstanding with Prince Khurram was supposed by Jahangir and Nur Jahan as the best choice to

\textsuperscript{13}Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri, vol. 3, p. 583.
\textsuperscript{14}Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, p. 354; Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri, vol. 3, p. 582.
\textsuperscript{15}Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, p. 353.
\textsuperscript{16}Dutch Chronicle, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{17}Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, p. 354; Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri, vol. 3, pp. 582-83.
be deputed against the rebel Prince.\textsuperscript{18} Because of this a royal \textit{farman} with the \textit{nishan} of Nur Jahan was sent to Mahabat Khan recalling him to come to court from Kabul. Mahabat Khan was, however, very much suspicious of Asaf Khan and thinking that it might be a clever move of Asaf Khan to oust him from power and humiliate him, he plainly refused to obey till his rival Asaf Khan was not transferred to some other place. However, before leaving Kabul he requested Jahangir to transfer Asaf Khan from the governorship of Bengal and to punish Mutamid Khan because both of them were suspects of having secret alliance with rebel Prince. There were several nobles in the court who sympathized with Prince Khurram like Abdullah Khan Firoz Jang, Khalid Beg, Fidai Khan and Mutamid Khan etc. The most important, however, was Asaf Khan, the father-in-law of the Prince. Before launching the offensive against the rebel Mahabat Khan first of all punished those who were suspected to be informer of the rebel Prince. It was only after the request of Mahabat Khan was accepted.\textsuperscript{19} To alley his suspicion Emperor deputed Asaf Khan to go to Agra to bring the royal treasure from there.\textsuperscript{20} Moreover, Nur Jahan also considered Asaf Khan to be an obstacle to her designs. She, therefore, availed of this opportunity to remove him from the court on the pretext that he should bring the treasure from Agra.\textsuperscript{21} Author of the \textit{Dutch chronicle} writes- ‘The king was still considered whether he should send Abdullah Khan with other \textit{umaras} to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Tuzuk-\textit{i Jahangiri}, p. 354; \textit{Iqbalnama-\textit{i Jahangiri}}, vol. 3, pp. 582; \textit{Maa’sir-\textit{i Jahangiri}}, p. 360; \textit{Muntakhab-ul Lubab}, p. 334.
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Tuzuk-\textit{i Jahangiri}, p. 354; \textit{Iqbalnama-\textit{i Jahangiri}}, vol. 3, pp. 582-83.
  \item \textsuperscript{20}Tuzuk-\textit{i Jahangiri}, vol. 1, p. 240.
  \item \textsuperscript{21}Maa’sir-ul Umara, vol. 1, p. 288
\end{itemize}
Qandahar and have treasure for this purpose brought from Agra. He worried himself as to whom to send to Agra to bring the treasure. He decided to employ Asaf Khan, the brother of Nur Jahan for that service. At the king’s command he prepared (for the journey) and set out for Agra. Here the eunuch Itibar Khan was treasurer and controlled everything. He did not wish to entrust the royal treasure to Asaf Khan, but after long persuasion and persistent demand he gave the order to get the money ready. But he set to work very slowly and caused vexatious delay in making new leather bags, in filling the bags and in counting them, although Asaf Khan would have gladly given a receipt acknowledges to have received all full and complete without counting them. The soothsayer named an auspicious day on which the treasure of gold and silver was to be brought out and in accordance with the king’s command to be handed over to Asaf Khan.'22 At this time reports were received about the open rebellion of Khurram and his march towards Agra.23 He was aware of the fact that his father was at that time under the complete domination of Nur Jahan and, therefore, he thought of his impending scheme to surprise attack and capture of Agra before the imperial army and nobles could manage to forestall his march to Agra. When Asaf Khan was deputed to bring the treasure from Agra, a message was received by the Emperor from Itiqad Khan that Khurram was proceeding from Mandu to Agra.24 Possibly Khurram had been secretly informed by Asaf Khan and his other supporters at the court about the royal

22* Dutch Chronicles*, p. 57.
23*Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, vol. 1, p. 247.
treasure being transferred to Lahore. Fearing that Khurram might capture it on the way, the Emperor despite his ill health proceeded to Agra on the pretext of hunting.\(^{25}\) Probably Asaf Khan threw a hint to the Prince about his movement, so that he might seize the treasure. According to the information contained in the *Dutch Chronicles* mentions that- ‘meantime Asaf Khan had written to Shah Jahan that soon as he left Agra with the treasure, the Prince should rapidly follow him in the reign between Agra and Delhi, and he would handed over the treasure to him.’\(^{26}\) The plan was very pleasing and acceptable to the Prince who hoped through this means to successfully carry out his intention.\(^{27}\) But once he discovered that the Emperor had sensed his designs and had himself proceeded towards Agra to forestall them, he informed to them that since khurram was proceeding to Agra it was not safe to bring the royal treasure.\(^{28}\) To avoid further suspicion he himself preceded from Agra to join the royal forces\(^{29}\).

*Dutch Chronicle* mentions that- ‘Itibar Khan fortified the castle of Agra and put it into a state or defence, mounting all the guns in the arsenal on the ramparts and walling up all the gates.’\(^{30}\) He again mentions that – ‘When army of Prince interred into the Agra he advanced towards gate of castle and some solders of Itibar Khan fought for the long time….Then Raja Bikramajit also came into the

\(^{25}\)Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, vol. 1, p. 247; *Dutch Chronicle*, p. 57.

\(^{26}\)This is improbable Asaf Khan, thought he was Shah Jahan’s Father-in-law remained loyal to Jahangir. Had he planned to join Khurram openly in this way, he would not have been deterred by the failure of Khurram’s attempt this way; he would not have been deterred by the failure of Khurram’s attempt and would have gone over to his side later on. F. n. *Dutch Chronicle*, p. 103.

\(^{27}\)Dutch Chronicles*, p. 56.


\(^{30}\)Dutch Chronicle*, p. 57.
town and stopped for two days to the house of Asaf Khan. Contemporary Persian sources, however, are silent about the sympathetic attitude of Asaf Khan, but number of European travellers writes about his secret alliance with the Prince. Della Valle says that ‘concerning Asaf Khan it was said that he was held in custody by the king as suspected of rebellions.’ An English factor Willoughby observed that – ‘Asaf Khan is committed prisoner into the hands of Lala Bir Singh.’

After three years it was over with the failure of Prince. Asaf Khan was in great dilemma during the whole period of rebellion, it was the open rebellion between the two, on which one was his son-in- law another were his sister and brother-in-law. Both were extremely important for him. Had he openly supported his son-in-law, he would have been thrown out from the court service and post. Therefore, Asaf Khan remained silent throughout the revolt and secretly supported to the Prince. He kept himself aloof as long as the revolt was continued, never taking part in any important military activity and important political assignment. However, he was watching the situation carefully with great concern expecting desirable results of the rebellion. Both Nur Jahan and Asaf Khan started poisoning the ear of the Emperor and trying to create a ditch between Mahabat khan and Prince Parvez. Relation between Mahabat Khan and Asaf Khan, brother of Nur Jahan was also not very cordial.

31 Dutch Chronicles, p. 58.
32 The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India (1622-23), vol. 1, p.121.
34 Pant Chandra, Nur Jahan and her family, p. 69.
Thomas Roe states that Mahabat Khan as early as in September, 1616 pointed out to him that Asaf Khan was not a man to be trusted fully and remarked him as their enemy. Further he states that Mahabat Khan regarded Asaf Khan as responsible for creating an edge between him and the Emperor. Mutamid Khan the author of *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri* and the author of Dutch *Chronicles*, who are also contemporaries, provide ample information about the revolts of Khurram and Mahabat Khan.

**Role of Asaf Khan during the rebellion of Mahabat Khan**

It is very surprising that Mahabat Khan who was one of the companions of Jahangir from the days of his princehood and since then had been his most loyal noble, revolted in March 1626 after serving for a long period of more than twenty years. The nature of the revolt of Mahabat Khan and its related developments indicate that it was an exceptional historical event at least in the time of Emperor Jahangir. Because of this, the contemporary writers, officials or non-official have discussed about it in detail. Participating of Mahabat Khan in the revolt of Shahjahan had also made him a controversial figure in the court of Jahangir.

A careful study of the close relations of Mahabat Khan with Emperor Jahangir and his success on different fronts, especially in the Deccan where Asaf Khan had failed, and later his role in the suppression of the revolt of Khurram might had been the cause of hostility between Mahabat Khan and

---

Prince Parvez on the one side and Mahabat Khan and Asaf Kan and Nur Jahan on the other. Thus, for their vested interest, both Nur Jahan as well as Asaf Khan wanted to ruin Mahabat Khan by poisoning the ears of Emperor Jahangir by presenting false charges against him. In this context, it is significant to note that on the eve of the revolt of Mahabat Khan in 1627, we notice three main contenders to the throne. Firstly, Prince Shahriyar, supported by Nur Jahan; Secondly, Prince Khurram, having the sympathy of his father-in-law Asaf Khan, and lastly Prince Parvez who was expected to receive the support of Mahabat Khan.

The members of the royal family especially Nur Jahan and Asaf Khan succeeded in creating a doubt in the mind of Jahangir about the loyalty of Mahabat Khan. The result was that the Emperor lost complete faith in his favourite noble, Mahabat Khan. The above mentioned conspirators succeeded in convincing the Emperor to take the charge of guardianship of Prince Parvez from Mahabat Khan. Mahabat Khan was fully aware of the fact that all these were the outcome of misguiding the Emperor by Nur Jahan, Khan-i Khanan and other Chaghtai enemies of the court, and to some extent Asaf Khan.

After inflicting a crushing defeat on Prince Khurram in Bengal, Mahabat Khan left the place and moved towards the Deccan against the rebel Prince. When the imperial army led by Prince Parvez and Mahabat Khan reached

---

36 Nur Jahan and her family, Chandra Pant, Allahabad, 1978, pp. 67-70
37 Dutch Chronicle; p. 75.
38 Dutch Chronicle, p. 96.
Sarangpur from Bengal in pursuits of rebel Prince Khurram, Mahabat Khan received *farman* of Jahangir to the effect of his dismissal from the prestigious charge of guardianship of the Prince Parvez. Khan-i Jahan Lodi was appointed as the guardian of Prince Parvez in his place, Now Mahabat Khan was ordered to return back to Bengal.\(^{39}\) Prince Parvez in response to the decision of the Emperor expressed his unwillingness, but it was not taken into consideration.\(^{40}\) Mahabat Khan was fully aware of the fact that all these were outcome of the misguiding to the Emperor by Nur Jahan, Khan-i Khanan and other Chaghtai enemies of court and to some extent Asaf Khan.\(^{41}\) Immediately after the second *farman*, a third one was issued according to which in case of the failure of Mahabat Khan to go to Bengal he was expected to present himself before the Emperor alone.\(^{42}\) Mahabat Khan took the treatment of the Emperor as very alarming and because of this explained the ill-treatment to the Prince meted out to him by the court. He took leave from Prince Sultan Parvez at Burhanpur, but he came out with him up to Sarai Bihar.\(^{43}\)

\(^{39}\) *Dutch Chronicle*, p. 74.

\(^{40}\) *Dutch Chronicle*, p. 74.

\(^{41}\) *Dutch Chronicle*; p. 75.

\(^{42}\) He was also ordered to leave all the troopers at his disposal and the booty and elephants he had captured from the rebel Prince. Mahabat Khan wanted to keep some of the *mansabdars* and his trustworthy officers with him but Fadil Khan, the *Diwan* displayed the order of Jahangir and informed his officials that no one should give him company and go with him because Mahabat Khan had displeased the Emperor; *Tuzuk-i Jahanegir*, p. 398; *Iqbalnana-i Jahanegir*, vol. 3, p. 512; *Maa`ir-ul Umara*, vol. 3 p. 391; *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, vol. 2, p. 131; *Maa`ir-i Jahanegir*, p. 427; *Dutch Chronicle*, p. 75.

The news of the approach of Mahabat Khan with a large army fully devoted to his will surprised Nur Jahan and Asaf Khan both who complained to Emperor Jahangir. Nur Jahan sent a letter to Mahabat Khan not to proceed further and in case of disobedience he would be responsible of dire consequences. Both Nur Jahan and Asaf Khan informed the Emperor about the arrogance of Mahabat Khan. Jahangir by this time (March 1626) had reached the Jhelum River where he decided to encamp on its bank. At this time Mahabat Khan was informed that he would not be allowed to see the Emperor unless he had submitted the report of his activities in Bengal and paid the amount he had accumulated from certain jagirs and other sources during his stay in the above mentioned province.

The role so far played by Nur Jahan and Asaf Khan had brought to surface the fact that they were bent upon to ruin Mahabat Khan. He now fully

---

44Mahabat Khan was preparing himself to visit the Emperor in person at the same time the Mughal officer named Arab Dast Ghaib with 1000 cavalry reached Ranthambore with an order of Jahangir related to Mahabat Khan. Mahabat Khan informed him that there was no need to explain the context of the royal order because he was well aware of that. He further conveyed Arab Dast Ghaib that he would be shortly going on the court; Zakhirat-ul Khawanin, p. 41; Maa’sir-ul Umara, vol. 3, p. 391- 392; Dutch Chronicle, p. 75. According to Fatehnama-i Nur Jahan Begam, the army of Mahabat Khan was more than 10,000, p. 8 except it other all sources give the number of army up to 5000 to 8000.

45Dutch Chronicle, p. 75.


47In the series of charges, Mahabat Khan was also blamed for marrying his daughter with Khawaja Barkhurdar Naqshbandi without the prior permission of the Emperor. Reacting to all the proceeding developments related to Mahabat Khan, the Emperor first ordered to imprison the son-in-law of Mahabat Khan and to seize all belongings he had received as dowry. Fidai Khan was entrusted the task to execute the order and submit it in the royal treasury. Khawaja Barkhurdar was openly humiliated and tortured before the imperial army. Similar kind of treatment was also meted out to the
realized that the Emperor was adopting harsh attitude towards him believing that he was misguided equally by Nur Jahan and Asaf Khan and that there was no honest person with the Emperor who would explain the things in a proper way.\textsuperscript{48}

In March 1626, the news of arrival of Mahabat Khan at Behad reached to Jahangir who was in the imperial camp on the bank of river Jhelum.\textsuperscript{49} Despite all defensive measures of Mahabat Khan to keep the imperial army on the opposite side of the royal camp, Asaf Khan with imperial troops, his family members and royal treasury succeeded in crossing the river to protect the Emperor.\textsuperscript{50} Mahabat Khan then entered the private chamber of the Emperor. At this time Emperor Jahangir was sleeping and when he came to know of the


above happenings he awoke up. Mahabat Khan first performed the ceremonial salutation and zamin-bos and then humbly requested the Emperor that he had no option but to follow this way to justify himself before the Emperor. He stated the Emperor that Asaf Khan had labelled a number of baseless charges against him which are without any ground and that he wanted to put him to death. Besides he had closed all the doors on him making it impossible to see the Emperor in person. As a consequence, in utter desperation he was forced to throw himself in an unexpected manner under his protection. Mahabat Khan also said that if he was supposed by the Emperor to be fit for death or other punishment he was ready to be executed then and there. By this time the Rajputs followers of Mahabat Khan had brought the private apartment, the Emperor and all the attendants practically under their control.

51 Zakhirat-ul Khawanin, sec, I, p. 43; Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri, vol. 3, pp. 601-2, does not mention this event. Mutamid Khan tried to stop Mahabat Khan in the door of bathroom. He says that Jahangir was not sleeping, he was in palki when Mahabat Khan opened the curtain of the palki in which Jahangir was seated.); Dutch Chronicle, p. 76.


53 At this juncture the Rajput followers of Mahabat Khan fully armed and well equipped surrounded the royal pavilion. Most of the royal troops and servants of Jahangir left the royal camp out of fear of the Rajputs supporters of Mahabat Khan except few noted and devoted servants like Arab Dast Ghaib, Mir Mansur Badakhshi Khwaja Jawar Khan etc. Muqarrab Khan Shaikh Hassu who was also present there at this time passed serious comments on the arrogant activities of Mahabat Khan. Mahabat Khan lost his temper and injured him badly in the presence of Jahangir. This kind of behaviour enraged the Emperor to such an extent that he decided to cut Mahabat Khan into pieces with his sword. But keeping in mind the grave situation he put his passion under control on the advice of Mansur Badakhshi. For detail see- Maa’sir-i Jahangiri, pp. 438-39; Maa’sir-ul Umara, vol. 3, p. 394; Zakhirat-ul
After taking the Emperor under his custody Mahabat Khan decided to go for hunting with him. By doing so he wanted to give an impression that the boldness and audacity of Mahabat Khan was on the pretext of Emperor Jahangir.\textsuperscript{54}

It appears that Mahabat Khan wanted to bring all the family members of Emperor Jahangir under his control. That’s why he ordered his followers to find out Nur Jahan and Prince Shahriyar. But both of them were not available there\textsuperscript{55} because they had gone to Asaf Khan’s camp. The author of *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin* mentions that the main purpose of Nur Jahan’s visit to her brother at this critical juncture must have been to chalk out the plan for the release of the Emperor. This assumption is fully substantiated from the subsequent developments. An urgent meeting was called in which all the leading nobles, who were available, participated. Nur Jahan blamed her brother Asaf Khan and the nobles for their negligence which provided such an opportunity to Mahabat Khan to siege the Emperor. Finally under the leadership of Nur Jahan the imperial army and officials decided to cross the river and fight a battle against


Mahabat Khan. When Jahangir came to know of this he sent Muqarrab Khan, Sadiq Khan, Mir-Mansur and others one after another to Nur Jahan with the advice that such action would not lead to any fruitful result. But Nur Jahan and her supporters took the suggestion of the Emperor as a product of Mahabat Khan’s mind and because of this it was not taken by them into account. The result was that on 18th March 1626, Nur Jahan, Asaf Khan, Khawaja Abul Hasan and other leading nobles decided to cross the river and fight against Mahabat Khan. Finally with great difficulties they succeeded in reaching the other side of the river.

The imperial army was commanded by Nur Jahan. A fierce battle started in which she showed rare valor and proved her commanding capacity. A quite good number of Mughal officers such as Jawahir Khan Khawaza Sara, nazir of the palace, Nadim the Khawaza Sara of Nur Jahan and similarly others sacrificed their lives while defending her. The elephants on which Nur Jahan was riding also received many wounds. Abdul Hasan who was fighting along

---


with Mutamid Khan deserted him when the army of Mahabat Khan posed a strong resistance to him. Likewise when Fidai Khan one of the strong supporters of Jahangir attempted to release the Emperor he was forced by the army of Mahabat Khan to flee from the royal camp and take shelter at Rohtas, situated on the other side of the river.  

Similarly, Asaf Khan also along with his army and family members fled to the fort of Attok. From there he tried to make fresh arrangements. For this reason he called the other Mughal officials to chalk out the plan.

It is striking to note that despite inferior in numerical strength the army of Mahabat Khan emerged victorious. Nur Jahan also, finding her position weak, surrendered before Mahabat Khan. By this time not only Jahangir and Nur Jahan, but other members of their family like Prince Shahriyar, Bulaqi, son of Khusrau and son of Daniyal also had fallen under the custody of Mahabat Khan.

Having consolidated his position Mahabat Khan now turned his attention to suppress his next enemy, i.e., Asaf Khan who had fled from the battlefield and taken shelter at Attock. He sent in advance his Ahadi guards,

---


Rajputs and many local zamindars under the leadership of his son Bihroz with the instruction to capture Asaf Khan and produce him alive before him. Realizing his position weak and no scope to escape Asaf Khan submitted himself before the army of Mahabat Khan on the condition that his life would be spared. But many of Asaf Khan’s followers were put to death. Abu Talib, son of Asaf Khan and son of Mir Mirza tied with chain were carried on an elephant. Other senior Mughal officials such as Maulana Mohammed and Ibrahim Khan were tortured in prison to such an extent that first one died in custody.

On the way of his journey Mahabat Khan took the revenge of his enmity with Asaf Khan by killing a large number of his supports like Abul Khaliq, Mohammed Tagi, the former Bakhshi of Prince Khurram and Mulla Muhammad Tatta, the spiritual preceptor of Asaf Khan.

By the mid of year 1626 Mahabat Khan by different methods had widely succeeded in establishing his control and influence and was managing the affairs of the empire without any strong opposition at this time. Farid Bhakkari’s remarks that Nur Jahan and the daughter of Asaf Khan were waiting for an opportunity to kill Mahabat Khan clearly substantiate the apprehension.

---


felt by Mahabat Khan. Taking advantages of the unfavourable situation being
faced by Mahabat Khan at this time Nur Jahan summoned all her amirs and
advised them to undermine his position. She tried to win them to her side
against Mahabat Khan. She ordered them to strengthen their power by fresh
recruitments of soldiers. As a result, the strength of Nur Jahan increased
considerably as her supporters joined her at different quarters. Meantime on 15
August 1626 the imperial camp on its way back to the capital from Kabul
reached Lahore.67

Shortly afterwards, the Emperor sent Afzal Khan to Mahabat Khan with
four different kinds of orders. Firstly, Mahabat Khan was ordered to proceed
against Prince Khurram who had taken shelter at Thatta and to settle the affair.
Secondly, he was told to release Asaf Khan from his custody. Thirdly, the two
sons of Prince Daniyal were to be sent to the royal presence. Fourthly, Mahabat
Khan was ordered to produce Lashkari son of Mukhlis Khan. Mahabat Khan
accepted all the demands of the Emperor except the release of Asaf Khan. In
this regard, he expressed his view that he would set Asaf Khan free after he had
crossed the river Chenab because Nur Jahan could send an army against him
for his destruction if he released Asaf Khan at this movement.68

67Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, p. 411; Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri, vol. 3, pp. 608-09; Zakhirat-ul
Khawanin, sec. I, p. 18; Maa’sir-ul Umara, vol. 3, pp. 396-97; Maa’sir-i Jahangiri,
68Tuzuk-i Jahangiri, p. 411; Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri, vol. 3, pp. 608-09; Zakhirat-ul
Khawanin, sec. I, p. 18; Maa’sir-ul Umara, vol. 3, pp. 396-97; Maa’sir-i Jahangiri,
pp. 456-58; Dutch Chronicle, pp. 79-80.
The Dutch chronicle gives a long description of the conversation which took place between Asaf Khan and Mahabat Khan shortly before Asaf Khan was released. It was only after the Emperor assured the safety of Mahabat Khan that he set Asaf Khan at liberty.\(^6^9\) When in September 1626 the imperial camp reached Lahore a large number of army joined the Emperor. Prince Shahriyar who had been sent to Lahore in advance had already enrolled a large number of troopers. He also succeeded in releasing Bulaqi and two sons of Prince Daniyal from the custody of the Rajputs of Mahabat Khan. Prince Shahriyar also brought the fort of Lahore under his control.\(^7^0\)

When Asaf Khan reached the Emperor and her sister, Nur Jahan he thanked Mahabat Khan for sparing his life. This kind of soft corner of Asaf Khan for a person like Mahabat Khan who for many months had created such a trouble for his sister and other members very much surprised Nur Jahan.\(^7^1\) A

\(^{6^9}\) For more details, see Dutch Chronicle, p. 81-Mahabat Khan called Asaf Khan and asked him to swear on the Book (The Quran) that he would always be as a brother to him, since he was sitting him at liberty, and had spared his life. “for” he said, ‘it was in my power to kill you,’ and in support of this, he showed to him several letters to the king, making it clear that he was commanded ten times to kill Asaf Khan and not to spare his life. ‘And I did not do it,’ he went on, and it is still in my power to kill you but for your shake. I wish to set you free. Therefore do not forget my kind action, and do not pay me for it by bringing false charges against me before the king, or setting traps for me’ Asaf Khan promised on oath that Asaf Khan promised on oath that henceforth Mahabat Khan would be much more to him than his own natural brother.


quite good number of Mahabat Khan’s followers were put to death and a large number were imprisoned. The imperial armies were rewarded by Nur Jahan for their victory.\textsuperscript{72}