CONCLUSION

It is surprising enough to notice that despite the fact that Asaf Khan who played a significant role in various capacities and experienced the reigns of two great Mughal emperors namely Jahangir and Shahjahan, he has not yet received full attention of the modern historians. His life and his role have been examined to a great extent only in the context of the power and the position of his sister Nur Jahan. From The History of Jahangir of Beni Prasad and that of Chandra Pant’s Nur Jahan and her Family, we get an impression that Asaf Khan in real sense had no independent position at Jahangir’s court and that his fate largely depended on the goodwill of Nur Jahan. Itimad-ud Daulah, Asaf Khan and Prince Khurram were other prominent members of her group. Beni Prasad also writes that the promotions and rewards in the empire entirely depended upon the good-will of these bonafide members of the so called ‘Junta’. According to him, because of the concentration of all powers into the hands of a these members, a large section of the nobility failed to receive promotions. As a consequence, a group opposed to the ‘Junta’ also emerged. Beni Prasad also divided the period of Nur Jahan’s ascendancy into two periods, first- from 1611 to 1622; and the second from 1622 to 1627. Nurul Hasan rejected the above mentioned assumption of Beni Prasad. He is of the view that the period between- 1611-1620 historically should not be studied as a period of Nur Jahan’s Junta. Irfan Habib with the help of contemporary sources once again tried to prove the extent of power and position Nur Jahan and her family
enjoyed during Jahangir’s reign. Although he does not totally agree with Beni Prasad’s ‘Junta’ theory, but to a certain extent supports the view that Nur Jahan and her family did not enjoy considerable power from 1611 to 1620 only, they have been occupying significant position even before the marriage between Jahangir and Nur Jahan took place. Contrary to this, a careful study of Asaf Khan’s deeds and role he played in the time of Jahangir and Shahjahan on different critical junctures makes it clear that he excelled his contemporaries in different ways.

Similarly the contemporary sources specially *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* and even *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri* have failed to do justice with Asaf Khan as both these sources have not treated him as a leading figure and his position has been under-estimated. Both the above works, so far as the family of Itimad-ud Daulah is concerned, revolve around Nur Jahan.

Besides, we find a detailed account of Asaf Khan in many biographical accounts such as *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin, Maa’sir-ul Umara and Tazkirat-ul Umara*. These biographical works are very useful in knowing Asaf Khan’s social and cultural contribution. If we carefully study the these Persian sources as well as European travellers’ account then we find that Asaf Khan fully established his own influence in the eyes of Jahangir and Shahjahan respectively on account of his own ability. This assumption is partly substantiated from the remarks of Jahangir in *Tuzuk*. He has regarded him as the pillar of the kingdom. Furthermore, Farid Bhakkari regards Asaf Khan as a ‘complete man, a man full with wisdom possessing the scientific knowledge, a
master of idioms, oratory, prose writing and an expert in writing *dastur-ul amal*.

Along with this, a careful study of Asaf Khan’s deeds and role he played during the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan on different critical junctures makes it clear that he excelled his contemporaries in different ways. The study of *English Factory Records* including the other travellers’ accounts, who visited Jahangir and Shah Jahan’s court, reveal many hitherto unknown facts about the important features of the life of Asaf Khan. In this respect special mention may be made of Thomas Roe who was a great admirer of Asaf Khan and got involved in discourses with him on different occasions.

Main concern of this research was to reveal this information contained in the accounts of the Europeans also and try to bring to light the significant aspects of the personality traits and power and position of Asaf Khan in the contemporary polity.

Contrary to the hypothesis of *Junta* theory, the careful examination of ranging from 1605 to 1611, we find a number of political circumstances which contributed in determining the rise of the family members of Asaf Khan. After the death of Akbar in 1605 we find that the nobility was broadly divided into two distinct factions– supporters of Prince Salim and those who wished to enthrone Prince Khusrau. The contemporary sources are silent about the role played by Asaf Khan’s family members on the eve of Akbar’s death. It appears that the members of Itimad-ud Daulah’s family initially didn’t become a party to any of the two claimants to the Mughal throne and decided to watch the
situation very carefully. Somehow, family of Itimad-ud Daulah received a setback and lost the confidence of Jahangir because of the involvement of Nuruddin, son of Ghayasuddin Ali Asaf Khan, (Brother-i-law of Abul Hasan Asaf Khan) and Muhammad Sharif, the elder brother of Asaf Khan, in a conspiracy was hatched by some of the nobles with Khusrau Ghayasuddin Ali Asaf Khan, and Muhammad Sharif, the elder brother of Asaf Khan, in a conspiracy that was hatched by some of the nobles with Khusrau to murder Emperor Jahangir in 1607 with the support of four hundred supporters. The incident has been recorded in Tuzuk-i Jahangiri in detail. It is worthy of note that Itimad-ud Daulah and many of his family members were arrested and after that received no attention of the Emperor for a long period of about four years (1606 -1610). Contrary to this we find that Jahangir gave rapid promotions to his close friends and associates who had stood loyal during his princehood as well as during the accession crisis.

Jahangir shortly after his ascending the throne was also faced with the problem of consolidation of empire which was left by Emperor Akbar. This involved paying their attention to the long continuing dispute with the Rana of Mewar, and the problem created in the Deccan by Malik Ambar. Bengal had faced with serious challenges from the local Hindu (Maghs) and Afghan zamindars. Similarly Qandahar problem was also a major problem for both the Emperors Akbar as well as Jahangir.

Period between 1606- 1610 had also been crucial from the view point of expedition sent in different directions. Unfortunately most of these campaigns
ended in a failure. The successive failures of the Mughals at different fronts forced Jahangir to realize the importance of those erstwhile nobles who had been neglected till date due to their dubious role during his accession crisis. The result was that Family member of Asaf Khan along with others was again recognized by Jahangir for his services to the Mughal Empire.

The revolt of Prince Khurram placed his father-in-law, Asaf Khan in great dilemma. It became obvious that 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. At time of Khurram’s proceeds from Mandu to Agra possibly he had been secretly informed by Asaf Khan. Jahangir in his Memoir mentions that the main reason to move towards Agra by prince Khurram was not to meet his father but to siege the royal treasure which was being carried on from Agra to Delhi under Asaf Khan’s custody at this time. By bringing the treasure at his disposal Prince Khurram wanted to strengthen his position. *The Dutch chronicle of Mughal India* also testifies the above assumption of Emperor Jahangir. It enumerates that 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. But the news of the proceeding of Jahangir from Delhi to Agra created grave situation for Asaf Khan. To avoid more confusion and save his position at the court Asaf Khan informed the Emperor that the shift of the royal treasure in the prevailing condition would not be advisable. 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.

However, after the rebellion was suppressed and Shahjahan was forced to submit, Asaf diverted his full attention towards the strongest enemy of Prince Khurram, i.e., 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 the union of Prince Parwez who might pose strong threat to Prince Khurram in the contest to the throne. By doing so, Asaf do away with the strong challenges which could be expected to surface during the succession of his son-in law in future.

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. Mahabat Khan now fully realized that the Emperor was adopting harsh attitude towards him believing that he (the Emperor) 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.

When Mahabat Khan captured Jahangir near the river Jhelum despite all his defensive measures 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. Mahabat Khan
then entered the private chamber of the Emperor, after performing the ceremonious salutation and *zamin-bos*, he 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 labeled 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. After that he took the Emperor under his custody and made a move to go for hunting with him.

During the rebellion of Mahabat Khan, Asaf khan fled to Attock and finally had to surrender with his son and son-in-law Khalilullah Khan to Mahabat Khan’s army. With the successive plan prepared by Nur Jahan to win over Mahabat Khan finally succeeded to bring back Emperor and later on Asaf Khan from the *coup* of Mahabat khan. *The Dutch Chronicle of Mughal India* 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.

It is significant to note that despite the sympathetic attitude of Asaf Khan towards Khurram and Mahabat Khan during their revolt, the Emperor continued to bestow on him all kinds of favours. Asaf Khan at this time was holding an exceptionally high rank of 7000 *zat* 7000 *sawar* along the post of *wakil* and was also appointed the *subahdar* of Panjab and Multan.
Demise of Emperor Jahangir took place on his way to Kashmir, on Sunday, 1 October 1627 (27 Safar 1057 A. H.) at Rajauri near Bhimbar. Now Asaf Khan had reached the zenith in terms of rank and influence. With the death of Jahangir, rifts between Nur Jahan and Asaf Khan windened on issue of succession to the throne. Jahangir, officially, had not appointed any one among his sons an heir to the throne. Nur Jahan wanted Shahriyar to succeed the royal throne and Asaf Khan supported his son-in-law Sultan Khurram. Therefore the first step of Asaf Khan was to communicate the message of the death of Emperor Jahangir through Banarasi Das with a signet ring to Prince Shahjahan who was at that time at Junnar near Ahmad Nagar border in the Deccan. Asaf Khan was not satisfied in his mind about Nur Jahan Begum. Therefore, he first of all had taken under his protection all three sons of Shahjahan who were under the custody of Nur Jahan since Khurram’s rebellion. Asaf Khan with the support of many senior nobles like, Iradat Khan and Azam Khan released Dawar Bakhsh (Bulaqi) from the prison and made him the Emperor, (A candidate who could be removed whenever they wished) on the throne to avoid any confusion. When prince Shahriyar heard the news of the passing away of Jahangir, he proclaimed himself Emperor and adopted royal title at Lahore. He himself seized upon the royal treasure and workshops and distributed seventy lacs of rupees among the nobles. A battle between Dawar Bakhsh and Shahriyar was fought. The rivals were finally defeated.

Before reached of Shahjahan could reach Agra, Dawar Bakhsh, Shahriyar, and sons of Prince Daniyal were executed. Finally, as the
consequence of the efforts of Asaf Khan his son-in-law, Khurram, ascended the throne at Agra and the coronation was held on 6 February 1628.

After the accession of Shahjahan it is evident that the credit for bringing the fortune to the side of Shahjahan substantially goes to Asaf Khan. As a special favor to his father-in-law Shah Jahan honored him with the _mansab_ of 8000 / 8000 and the title of _Yamin-ud Daulah_ was also awarded to him. The most prestigious post of _wakalat_ was also conferred upon him. In the subsequent period Asaf Khan was given a very high _mansab_ of 9000 / 9000 (_du aspa si aspa_). During the reign of Shah Jahan, Asaf Khan fully proved his dynamic qualities of leadership in the battlefield and in supervising the administration of the Empire or state.

Besides the political achievements and good quality in managing state affairs, he had also interest in building construction. His residence at Lahore was valued at 20 lakh of rupees at the time of his death. Worth of other houses and gardens in Delhi, Agra and Kashmir was around 2 krors 50 lacs rupees besides jewels and coins in gold and silver, etc.

He had also keen interest in trade and commerce. He maintained friendly relations with foreign merchant especially those of the East India Companies. He earned huge amount of money and valuable presents by granting concessions to the English East India Company.

He had a great liking for good eating. Mughal Emperor rarely used to visit the house of their noble. They would usually go to those families which were in matrimonial alliance with the royal house. Jahangir visited Asaf Khan’s
house at least two or three times and Shahjahan as his son-in-law used to come regularly, sometimes more than once in a month. He gave lavish feasts and banquets and arranged them in a very nice way. In Tuzuk Jahangir also mentioned many times about the invitation from Asaf Khan to the emperor along with the ladies of royal harem to visit his house. Thomas Roe and Manrique give detailed description of an occasion when Emperor visited Asaf Khan’s palace.

Apart from being a successful statesman, he was quite scientific in his thoughts. He was also an elegant writer and a good conversationalist. He was perfect in accountancy and well experienced in business. He audited and scrutinized the account of the amils of the crown lands. He used to employ many select regular servants and had a share of good disposition, humility, forbearance and modesty. He spoke gently and in a non-sensual term and never escape his tongue. He personally examined the accounts of the officers of the exchequer and of the other officers and had no need of any guidance in this. He was a philanthropic having soft corner for the downtrodden.

Conclusively to say, the information available in the Persian sources and in the accounts of the foreign travellers on Asaf Khan reveals the fact that his life and times cannot be confined only in political terms. The social, economic and cultural aspects of his career are equally important to know his position properly and place him in history as one of the most important figure in the time of Jahangir and Shahjahan.