IV

Evidence On The Dullah Bhatti Bar And

The Tribes Settled In It

Physical Description of the Area:-

Ghulam-Muhy-ud-Din gives a vivid description of the Dullah Bhatti Bar which was a desert land and had expanded towards the west of Lahore reaching the extremes of Multan in the south on the banks of the river Ravi. In the north it was situated on the banks of the Chenab and was located between a length of 50 farsang and width of 40 farsang. It was a dense forest-land in the desert and had immense thorny bushes and trees like “mughil” (Kikar), jund and Karir. The density of the trees prevented even a human being to cross it. Its intricate, complicated and zig-zag roads, arduous even for a rabbit or a fox to search out their way. Equally hard was it to imagine that men, running horses or elephants could traverse it. The Kharals, Bhattis, Gondals and Ranjhas were the wild tribes who settled here, but lived only in the remote interior surrounded by deep marshy lands.

Every little plant in a hedge or a bush had poisonous snakes in its roots and because of the crowded thorny bushes it was not possible even to dig out a well. Only source of water was rain. It was not available anywhere else. Absence of fountains or tanks had virtually reduced the chances of finding water anywhere else. Their houses

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were built on slippery places\textsuperscript{2}. This made life difficult but it also discouraged armies to approach them or attempt to take possessions of their houses. In case an army ever succeeded in dislodging them from their houses and lands, they had the hidden passes to help them reach for away from them in the vicinity of the Punjab. This also made it a tenuous job for the armies to go in their pursuit\textsuperscript{3}.

Dispatching forces against them was easier but extremely difficult to trace them out of their hide-outs and fight against them. They avoided face to face encounters with armies and preferred to seek safety in flight through unknown and difficult paths\textsuperscript{4}.

\textbf{Nawab’s Expedition Against These Tribes:-}

The author seems keen to establish that the Zamindars i.e, the landlords in almost all the districts of Punjab had taken adequate steps for the proper collection of revenue in their respective areas and that the people residing there were properly taken care of\textsuperscript{5}. Perhaps he wants to arrive at the conclusion that in the plains incidents of robberies, loot and plunder were rare whereas they were occurring on a large scale in rural areas. But the situation however was different in the desert and hilly area. He has analyzed the causes which persuaded the people to raise arms against the State. The first factor was that those who did not pay the taxes or the revenues to the State. They took shelter in the remote areas of the desert to escape punishment at the hands of the Mughal officials. This category belonged to the prosperous people whom their prosperity had

\textsuperscript{2} Ghulam-Muhy-ud-Din, \textit{Futuhat-Namah-i-Samadi}, MS., BM., Or. 1870, London. f.85 (Lines 10-11)
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid.}, ff.86-88.
\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Ibid.}, f.86 (Lines 6-12).
\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Ibid.}, f.83 (Lines 12-15).
egged on to make a loud display of their disloyalty to the State. They took pride in demonstrating such a behaviour. Another category belonged to those who were wild of nature and were habitual criminals like the Kharals, the Bhattis, Gondals and the Ranjhas. They always indulged in pillage and plunder, loot and ransack, steal and rob. There were Munj and Afghans who were by nature always intent upon injuring others.

In the past, powerful armies under commanders like Khanjahan Zabardast Khan and Munim Khan were dispatched to rescue them to subjection. They were expected to bring them down to such extremities that should serve a lesson to the rest. They never hesitated to accomplish the task assigned to them. They never ignored them too. At present, the government has the Kharals to deal with, in the first instance. They held control over the highways, roads and bridges, and were determined to indulge in stealing, seizing, rifling and robbing. The caravans going from Kabul to Wazirabad and Kashmir were also targeted such lands stretching to almost one hundred kohs were open to their high handed exercises. Their inaccessible regions and hazardous approaches had practically isolated them from the rest of the mankind.

The Nawab entrusted the government of the Punjab to his son Zakariya Khan and placed the services of Arif Beg Khan at his disposal, for restoring peace in the Punjab. He himself decided to march against the nasty tribes. As usual, skilled baildars accompanied the Nawab for clearing the dense forests, hedges, bushes and shrubs. The royal army marched along the road thus cleared. The tribes crossed the river Ravi and fled from one part of the desert to the other. If they ever came across a cultivated colony and delightful

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6 Ghulam-Muhy-ud-Din, *Futuhat-Namah-i-Samadi*, MS., BM., Or. 1870, London. f.84 (Lines 1-9)


8 *Ibid.*, f.87 (Lines 3-8).
places fit for human settlement or a village, they would not hesitate to plunder their riches and destroy the place. That is why if anyone entered this area they would set up ‘shikhar gahs’ on the peripheries and would not invite any trouble by engaging these tribes⁹. If they took to flight the armies were instructed to rush in pursuit of them and they were expected to wipe out the land of the Punjab from this garbage.

The Nawab was always unfaltering in his zeal. He issued instructions to the Faujdars, the Subadars and officers all around not to allow the rebels approach the borders of their territory. If ill-luck brought anyone to their boundaries, they would not allow him to get out from there alive. He also issued similar warnings to the Subadar of Multan. His army forced the rebels to run for their lives while he himself followed them resolutely to exterminate them. Thus issuing warnings and beating drums, the Mughal forces under the Nawab reached Multan¹⁰. The fugitive tribes were threatened with sure death but to their good luck a peril sounded from a different direction to save them from the Mughals. The threatening news about the re-emergence of Banda in the Punjab plains was too alarming to be ignored. It caused a huge turmoil in the State. All the towns like Sialkot, Pasrur, Aurangabad, Nimkar, Chamyari, Neshta, Kalanour, Batala and many other such places were plundered. The Nawab decided to hasten to the Punjab and personally face the new threat¹¹.

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⁹ Ghulam-Muhy-ud-Din, Futuhat-Namah-i-Samadi, MS., BM., Or. 1870, London. ff.87-88.
¹⁰ Ibid., f.89.
¹¹ Ibid., f.89 (Lines 10-15). The Nawab received a public letter to come back to Punjab.