CHAPTER X

SAINTLY PERSONAGES:
THEIR ROLE IN MUGHAL -AFGHAN CONFLICT

In the present chapter we propose to give
the biographies of some of the leading contemporary Muslim
saints of Hindustan who figured prominently in the Mughal-
Afghan conflict during the period under study. The saints
who were conspicuous by their role were Shaikh Ghuran,
Shaikh Jamali, Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus of Gwalior and
Saiyyid Rafi. As they seem to have exercised considerable
influence and commanded respect from the Afghan nobility,
as well as, the masses, they were an integral part of the
Afghan polity. It is, therefore, not surprising that
Babur tried to win them over and utilise their good offices
in the Mughal-Afghan conflict in consolidating his
position in Hindustan, as can be seen from the following
account. We begin with the account of Shaikh Ghuran.

SHAikh GHURAN

Shaikh Ghuran was a Shaikhzada of Kol. During
the reign of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi he held an igta in the
Mian-i Doab. After the battle of Panipat when Babur
ascended the throne of Agra, he sent farmans of favour to
the tarkashband of Kol through Mulla Apaq. Shortly afterwards Shaikh Ghuran came along with two to three thousand

1. See I. H. Siddiqi, "The Composition of the Nobility
under the Lodi Sultan*, Medieval India: A Miscellany
soldiers and tarkashband from the Mian-i Doab and waited upon Babur. In July 1526, Shaikh Ghuran was sent along with the quiver wearers of the Mian-i Doab and other Turk amirs, namely Hindu Beg, Kitta Beg and Malik Qasim with his elder and younger brethren against Mian Bibban Jilwani, who had besieged Qasim Sambhali in Sambhal. When the expeditionary forces reached Sambhal, Mian Bibban Jilwani could not make any stand and fled away. Next day when other begs reached Sambhal, Qasim Sambhali came out of the fort and saw them, but refused to surrender the fort to the Mughals. Finally, Shaikh Ghuran and Hindu Beg succeeded in compelling Qasim Sambhali to surrender the fort of Sambhal to the expeditionary forces.

In November-December, 1526, Shaikh Ghuran along with Rahimdaw and other amirs was sent to Gwalior to help Tatar Khan, who was then besieged in the fort of Gwalior by one of the rajas of the neighbourhood of Baburnama, Eng. tr. Bev., vol. ii, p. 526; B. M. M. Or. 3714, f. 416a-b; Akbarnama, Eng. tr. H. Bev., vol. i, p. 253; Tarikh-i Firishta, Eng. tr. Briggs vol. ii, p. 32; Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh, Eng. tr. Ranking, vol. i, p. 444

Gwalior. Babur directed Shaikh Ghuran to return after Rahimdad was established in Gwalior.\(^1\)

Shaikh Ghuran also rendered military services to Babur in the *baranghar* in the battle of Kanwah against Rana Sanga.\(^2\) On March 17th, 1527, after the battle of Kanwah, Babur sent Shaikh Ghuran along with other begs from Kanwah against Rustam Khan (variation: Ilias Khan), who had taken Kol and made Kichik Ali prisoner. After a fight Rustam Khan could not make stand and fled away, but a few days later he was imprisoned and sent to Agra, where he was flayed alive.\(^3\) After the supression of the rebellion of Rustam Khan, Shaikh Ghuran was honoured with the title of Abul Fath.\(^4\)

In September, 1527, when Babur was at Kol, on the invitation of Shaikh Ghuran he visited his house. Shaikh Ghuran offered him meals and presents.\(^5\)


\(^3\) Baburnama, op. cit., p. 576; B. M. MS. Or. 3714, f. 456a; Akbarnama, op. cit., p. 266; Tarikh-i Alfi, Hindi tr. Rizvi, Mughal Kalin Bharat, Babur, p. 642.

\(^4\) Waqiat-i Mushtagi, Hindi tr. Rizvi, Mughal Kalin Bharat, Babur, p. 440.

\(^5\) Baburnama, op. cit., p. 587, B. M. MS. Or. 3714, f. 463a.
In January, 1528, moving towards Chanderi when Babur was encamped near Kalpi he sent Shaikh Ghuran in advance along with other amirs under the command of Chin Timur Sultan to Chanderi.

On April 27th, 1529, on his march towards east when Babur went southwards in the Ari (Ariah) pargana to see the sheets of lotus, during this excursion Shaikh Ghuran brought fresh set of lotus seeds for Babur. Later on, in the same year when Babur was at Agra, Shaikh Ghuran sent a basket of grapes to Babur.

On September 7th, 1529, Shaikh Ghuran along with Nur Beg was sent to Gwalior to take the charge of Gwalior fort from Rahimdad. After that we do not notice Shaikh Ghuran during the period under review.

SHAIKH JAMALI

Shaikh Jamali was another prominent saint of the period under review. He was the disciple and successor of Saiyyid Shamsuddin Saharwardi. He was a very learned man and was held in high esteem by Sultan Sikandar. He was

2. Ibid., p. 666; B. M. MS. Or. 3714, f. 506a.
3. Ibid., p. 686; B. M. MS. Or. 3714, f. 527a.
4. Ibid., p. 690; B. M. MS. Or. 3714, f. 528b.
also a poet and a widely travelled person. During the reign of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi Shaikh Jamali lost his privileged position.

Shaikh Jamali is first mentioned in Babur's memoirs on the eve of the battle of Kanwah. Babur tells us that before engaging with Rana Sanga he sent Shaikh Jamali on February 29th, 1527, to collect the tarkashband from the Mian-i Doab and Delhi region and plunder the villages of Mewat, the ruler of which had already joined Rana Sanga. Shaikh Jamali attacked a few villages of Mewat, but he could not produce much effect.

We next notice Shaikh Jamali in Babur's service in the year 1528, when we find him present in a feast held at Agra on December 18th, 1528, in which he was seated to Babur's left along with other dignitaries.

In the year 1529 (on April 21st), Shaikh Jamali was sent by Babur as his emissary to Jalal Khan Nohani of Bihar and his mother Dudu with encouraging farmans.

4. Ibid., p. 631; B. M. MS Or. 3714, f. 490b.
5. Ibid., p. 665; B. M. MS Or. 3714, f. 506b.
As a result of this mission, in May, 1529, Jalal Khan Nohani waited upon Babur along with several other Afghan chiefs. Shaikh Jamali was a great admirer of Babur and has composed six gasidas in praise of Babur. He had also expressed his happiness at the victory of Babur over Sultan Ibrahim Lodi in the battle of Panipat.

SHAIIKH MUHAMMAD GAUS

Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus of Gwalior was another highly respected saint of his time. Babur says that he was a darwesh and had a large following of students and disciples. He belonged to the Shattari silsilah of the sufis. When consequent upon Rana Sanga's capture of Kandahar Gwalior was besieged by the rajas of the surrounding territory, Tatar Khan Sarang Khani sought Babur's help. Babur sent Rahimdad along with several other amirs, namely, Shaikh Ghuran and Mulla Apaq to help Tatar Khan Sarang Khani. When the Mughal forces reached Gwalior, the threat to Tatar Khan Sarang

Khani was over. He, therefore, refused to surrender the fort to the Mughals. In such circumstances Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus sent a message to Rahimdad to enter into the fort through some device. Finally, with the help of Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus, Rahimdad succeeded in capturing the fort of Gwalior and Tatar Khan Sarang Khani was sent to Agra.

Later on, when Rahimdad revolted against Babur, Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus played an important role in bringing about reconciliation between Rahimdad and Babur. Hence, on September 7th, 1529, Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus reached Agra from Gwalior and pleaded forgiveness for Rahimdad. Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus being a pious man, for his sake, as Babur says, he forgave all the faults of Rahimdad.

SAIYYID RAFI

Saiyyid Rafi was another notable saintly and learned person of the period. He is mentioned by Badaunl as traditionalist (muhaddis). Babur writes that it was through his intervention that Nizam Khan of Biana surrendered the fort of Biana to him. Later on, we notice

2. Ibid., p. 690.
Saiyyid Rafi in attendance upon Babur. On December 18th, 1528, when Babur held a feast in which Auzbek and Mangol envoys were present, Saiyyid Rafi was given a seat very close to Babur along with Muhammad Zaman Mirza and Auzbek Sultan Tang atmish. He seems to have had precedence over Abul Fath Shaikh Ghuran and Shaikh Jamali in the seating arrangement. Thus, it seems that he was a highly respectable figure of his time.

A RESUME

From the preceding account we notice that the saints actively associated themselves with the kings. Shaikh Ghuran even held an iqta from Sultan Ibrahim Lodi, although the relations of Shaikh Jamali with Sultan Ibrahim Lodi had severed. But, what is interesting to note is that in the Mughal-Afghan conflict the above mentioned saints, invariably, supported Babur. They even rendered valuable military services to Babur. Shaikh Ghuran, in particular, rendered valuable military services to Babur on various occasions. As we have noticed above, he was associated with many military campaigns sent by Babur for the subjugation of the various Afghan chiefs after his occupation of Agra. Shaikh Jamali also rendered military service to Babur.

2. Ibid., pp. 528-29, 539, 567, 576; B. M. MS. Or. 3714, ff. 416b, 419a, 427b, 449b, 456a.
3. Ibid., p. 551; B. M. MS. Or. 3714, f. 439a.
These saints played a crucial role in the establishment of Babur's authority on some of the important forts. To illustrate, Sambhal, Kol (Aligarh), Biana and Gwalior passed under the domination of Babur only because of the support lent by these saints. They were effectively used by Babur as mediators. It was only due to the mediation of Saiyyid Rafi that Biana passed into Babur's possession. Again, Gwalior also passed under the occupation of Babur only through the efforts of Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus. Besides, Shaikh Jamali was the person who was chosen by Babur as his envoy to Jalal Khan Nohani, the Nohani chief of Bihar. Again, it was Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus and Shaikh Ghuran who mediated between Babur and Rahimidad and brought about reconciliation between the two when the latter had revolted against Babur.

It seems that these saints were not only held in his respect by the Afghan nobility but also by the commoners, for, we notice that Shaikh Ghuran and Shaikh Jamali could also mobilize the solidiery and the tarkashband. When Shaikh Ghuran paid his homage to Babur, he brought

2. Ibid., pp. 539-40; B. M. MS. Or. 3714, f. 490b.
3. Ibid., p. 665; B. M. MS. Or. 3714, f. 506b.
with him two to three thousand tarkashband and soldiers. Shaikh Jamali also mobilized and commanded tarkashband for Babur in the operations preceding the battle of Kanwah.

Babur held the above mentioned saints in high respect and mixed with them freely. The seats given by Babur to Saiyyid Rafi and Shaikh Jamali at the feast held by him on December 18th, 1528, show that they were given precedence over a number of Mughal nobles and were treated at par in protocol with the princes of the royal blood. With Shaikh Ghuran, Babur mixed very freely. He not only accepted, from time to time, various gifts from Shaikh Ghuran, but also visited Shaikh Ghuran's residence for meals.

It is difficult to ascertain the causes as to why the above mentioned saints lent support to Babur against the Afghans. Perhaps, with the defeat and the death of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat they realized that none other than Babur could establish his authority in Hindustan and perhaps as a result of this realization, as well as, with a view to avoiding bloodshed among the Muslims, they exercised their influence over the Afghan nobility to persuade them to acknowledge Babur's authority.

2. Ibid., p. 587, B. M. MS. Or. 3714, f. 463a.