PREFACE

The ruling elite, especially at the highest level, has always played a key role in the rise and fall of civilizations and states. It is in this context that the celebrated historian A.J. Toynbee highlights the importance of the governing class at the top for which he has coined the term "creative minority." The latter's appropriate response to all kinds of challenges leads a civilization to success as long as the creative minority remains selfless and honest, working in the interest of the people. But, according to Toynbee, this group is transformed into a dominant minority when it becomes selfish and corrupt which forbids appropriate responses to challenges ultimately leading the society towards disintegration.

Thus, keeping in view this place of the ruling elite in history, I propose to study the position and the role of the Afghan and Shaikhzada nobles under Shahyahan, who, by and large, were a part of the governing class.

I am dedicating the thesis to my elder brother late Ayaz Ahmad who died of cancer. His love and affection sustained me during challenging and formative days since schooling. He remained a constant source of inspiration.
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Needless to say, any errors that remain in the thesis are mine
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