

Ibn Khaldun Theory of *Asabiyyah* and the Rise and Fall of the Mughals in South Asia

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Abstract

Ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis on 27 May 1332, into an Arab family of the Hadramaut which had first migrated to Spain, then to Morocco, and finally settled in Tunisia. He received a thorough education in theology and philosophy at the University (madrasa) of Tunis. At the age of twenty, he entered upon his chequered career, beginning as a secretary to the Sultan of Tunis. He served in various capacities and thus gained a versatile experience that helped him widen his understanding of human nature and political systems. Indeed, he was a prolific writer and scholar by leaving rich treatises on sociology, economics, history, politics, philosophy, and other disciplines. He propounded the theory of *Asabiyyah*: stemming out from blood lineage, common interests, common geography, and religion as a binding force and an ultimate factor of causing upswing and tumble to a dynasty or a state and thus he provided solid foundations to understand systematically the phenomenon of the rise and fall of dynasties and establishment of states and the factors which bring an ultimate decline to it. An attempt has been made in this article whilst applying this theory of *Asabiyyah* on the rise and fall of Mughals in South Asia. Founded by Babur in 1526, the Mughal Empire in India is divided into five periods as per the stages of Ibn Khaldun's theory of *Asabiyyah* and each period is presented analytically particularly in terms of the *Asabiyyah*. Thus, this article presented the Khaldun's cycle of the dynasty on the Mughal Empire who fulfilled its five stages on the soil of India.

Keywords: *Asabiyyah*, the Mughals, Rise of Empire, Fall of Empire, South Asia

Introduction

Abdur Rehman Ibn Khaldun was born in 1332, in Tunis (Africa). Due to his brilliant and deep insight, the ruler of Tunis, Abu Ishaq took him into his service when Khaldun was only twenty. Ibn Khaldun also served with Muhammad Ibn Yusuf, Sultan of Granada, and headed several missions to the court of King Castile. In this way, he acquired vast experience. He then retired to the Fort of Ibn Salaman in the Africa desert where he completed his well-known work *Prolegomena* in 1377.¹ However, *Muqaddimah* is the most famous work of Khaldun in which he stipulates different ideas about social change and development. Ibn Khaldun argues that the key factor behind the rise and fall of a civilization is *asabiyyah*.²

Virtually everyone who has written on Ibn Khaldun has presented their own interpretations of the term *asabiyyah*. To some, it is 'patriotism', 'national feelings', 'group cohesion',³ whereas for others it is 'group feelings', generated by common beliefs, common culture, common language, common economic interests, a common enemy, or common sufferings. "*Asabiyyah* is not just group solidarity; it is the combination of group solidarity with a political will to power and organized leadership. Group awareness with a desire to defend oneself and to press one's claim produces *asabiyyah*."⁴ Thus, according to Khaldun the factor of *asabiyyah* plays an important role in the affairs of human life.⁵ Nevertheless, *asabiyyah* is usually expressed in warlike activities.⁶

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¹ E. I. J. Rosenthal (1988), *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline*, London: Cambridge, pp. 260-261.

² Fida Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change: A Comparison with Hegel, Marx and Durkheim," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 15, p. 36.

³ Martin Hughes-Warrington (2000), *Fifty Key Thinkers on History*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 175-176.

⁴ Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change," p. 37.

⁵ Fuad Baali (1978), *Heinrich Simon: Ibn Khaldun's Science of Human Culture*, Lahore: Ashraf Printing Press, p. 67.

⁶ Hughes-Warrington (2000), *Fifty Key Thinkers on History*, p. 176.

Like Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun believes that man is social by nature. His nature and disposition compel him to live with his fellow being. Mutual help is essential to satisfy man's variegated needs for food, clothing, and housing. Therefore, man unites with many others like-minded to assure his protection and defense. As a result, various groups emerge. Many individuals in a certain geographical unit identify themselves as a single group; bonded together by common familial ties.⁷ When people start living together, mutual conflicts and rivalries arise among different groups. Each group will extend its hands for whatever it needs to take. The others in turn will try to prevent them from grabbing it. This long-drawn struggle for increasing one's own estate will cause dissension, hostilities, bloodshed, and loss of life. Thus, people cannot persist without a ruler and in a state of anarchy. They raise a ruler to keep them apart and order their life. The sanctioned power behind the authority of the ruler is the group feelings (*asabiyyah*) which is very essential for the ruler for the meaningful exercise of his authority.⁸

Here the ruler, who is first among the equals, plays a very dynamic role. He not only settles the mutual dispute within the group rather strives to revitalize their *asabiyyah*. Once he established his authority over his own people then he tries to exercise the same over the others outside groups. This leads to wars between different groups and states, and a ruler who commands a stronger *asabiyyah* always subdue the others with weak *asabiyyah*. In this way, a ruler of stronger *asabiyyah* establishes a vast empire by annexing the neighboring areas of communities with weak group feelings. Ibn Khaldun believes that a community with stronger *asabiyyah* cannot be overpowered.⁹

Khaldun then elaborates on the stages of *asabiyyah* through which it undergoes. Each stage has its own characteristics. In the early stages of tribal set-up, where *asabiyyah* is derived directly from blood relationship is the most resistible due to its austere nature.¹⁰ When a group with stronger *asabiyyah* conquers various contiguous regions then the empire naturally expands. They came into contact with larger groups of different origins. They are acquainted with a variety of luxuries. They become ease-loving and always seek comforts and sensual gratification. They forget the old customs of bravery, eagerness to work, to bear the hardships, and more importantly the feelings (*asabiyyah*) which had enabled them to establish authority over such a larger part of the land.¹¹ Eventually, they start to depend upon other helpers, militia, and partisans who were groups not related to the ruling dynasty. In this way, the senility of the dynasty sets in.¹²

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun mentions the underlying factors that create *asabiyyah*. Khaldun opined that the greatness of a community is often judged by the discipline and organization of its power structure and the ability of the power holders to galvanize the incoherent and scattered group feelings into an action-oriented cohesive unit.¹³ Leadership is the second most pivotal factor in the formation of *asabiyyah*. The prudence with which a leader leads its people and the trust and confidence that he inspires among them will determine the scope of *asabiyyah* that a group possesses.¹⁴

Religion is the third factor that strengthens the *asabiyyah* but Khaldun states very clearly that dynasties and states do not depend upon religion. Religion is not primarily the force that unites mankind.¹⁵ Yet, religion helps individuals to resolve some of the insoluble mysteries of life but also acts as an extremely powerful factor in socializing and facilitates unity of thought and action among its followers.¹⁶

Similarly, some factors are considered detrimental for the enervation and final collapse of *asabiyyah*. Among others, wealth and corruption quickly erode the very roots on which the *asabiyyah* has been established. The exposition towards pleasure and indulgence has deleterious effects on the people of simple tribes. Naturally, cities are equipped with all kinds of luxuries. Once they come into contact with

⁷ Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change," p. 37.

⁸ Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, Franz Rosenthal (trans.), N. J. Dawood (ed.), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, pp. 151-152.

⁹ Rosenthal (1988), *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, pp. 85-88.

¹⁰ Baali (1978), *Heinrich Simon*, p. 74.

¹¹ Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, p. 135.

¹² Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, p. 136.

¹³ Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change," pp. 38-39.

¹⁴ Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change," p. 39.

¹⁵ Baali (1978), *Heinrich Simon*, p. 82.

¹⁶ Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change," p. 39.

such luxuries then they lose their fighting spirit and become ease-loving whilst most of them are unwilling to die for their country.¹⁷

Secondly, the misuse of power is one of the major factors that sabotage the *asabiyyah*. Abuse of power produces resentment and frustration among the members of a group. The members lose faith in the objectives of the group when they are disenchanted with the leadership. The perpetuity of support that they extend to the leader makes no sense to them because the unwritten and simply understandable contract between the leader and group members is no more honored. Therefore, they withhold their support to the leader and in due course, centrifugal tendencies gradually get roots in society.¹⁸

The Rise and Fall of Mughals in India in terms of the Theory of *Asabiyyah*

In the paper, an attempt is made to analyze the rise and fall of Mughals in India in the light of Ibn Khaldun's profound theory of *asabiyyah*. Ibn Khaldun gave the theory of *asabiyyah* while keeping in mind the Sub-Saharan tribes of South Africa, the people with different climates, geography, and social and political systems. Yet, some of the elements of the theory can be applied to the rise and fall of the Mughals in India.

Before the Mughal invasion of 1526, India was ruled by the Lodi family. Babur, the fugitive ruler of Fergana valley was staying in Kabul. Since he had been ousted from his kingdom of Farghana by Shaibani Khan; therefore, Babur was planning to make eastward expansion.¹⁹ He got interested in India. Therefore, he was observing the situation within India with keen eyes and whenever saw a chance of success he invaded India. Consequently, he made some five attacks on India since 1505, but could not succeed in the first three attacks because the Lodi dynasty was strong enough to repulse foreign invasions.²⁰ It was only when the indigenous polity of India divided into different poles; a vacuum was created for the foreigners to invade. Sultan Ibrahim Lodi's discontented cousin Daulat Khan, the governor of Punjab went to the length of inviting Babur from Kabul to invade India. Alam Khan, the Sultan's uncle, and pretender of the Delhi throne claimed the seat of power, but after failing to secure the same, he also formally invited the Babur to invade India.²¹ By the time the *asabiyyah* of the Lodhi dynasty had evaporated. It had become a victim of disunity. Ibrahim's own men were conspiring against him let alone dying for him. In this way, their decline was on the horizon.

An interesting thing is that Babur proclaimed that he was waging a Holy war (*Jihad*) against Indian rulers. On the contrary, a Muslim government existed there in India. Nevertheless, religion has always been beyond the understanding of the common man and for them, religious slogans matter more than delving into the rationale of it. Anyway, in addition to his group cohesion, Babur skillfully utilized religious propaganda for achieving victory over the Indians. By giving a religious color to his campaign, he successfully washed away the mutual differences among his soldiers. According to Khaldun, the numerical strength of a dynasty hardly matters in terms of warfare but the unity of command and purpose of union. Those who possess larger manpower yet play at cross-purposes are quickly overpowered and wiped out by the small group.²² Much the same happened in the battlefield of Panipat on 21 April 1526, when Ibrahim Lodi approached with 100,000 men and nearly 1000 war-elephants to meet the arithmetically inferior force of Babur, comprising of some 12,000 men with a larger park of artillery.²³ Intense fighting took place. However, in the end, the Afghan army perished. Their leader Ibrahim lay dead on the battlefield and Babur became the ruler of Delhi.²⁴ In course of time, Babur further expanded his empire by routing Rajput leader Rana Sanga of Mewar in the Battle of Khanua or Kanwa in 1527. At the battlefield of Chanderi on 29 January 1528, Medini Rao had provided the final move against the Rajputs.²⁵ Muhammad Lodi, who has challenged Babur in 1529, faced humiliating defeat on the banks of Ghagara. Thus, Babur had subdued most of his enemies by the time he was dying on the 26th of December 1530, at Agra at the age of forty-seven or forty-eight.²⁶

¹⁷ Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change," p. 40.

¹⁸ Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change," p. 42.

¹⁹ Sir Richard Burn (ed.) (1987), *The Cambridge History of India: The Mughal Empire*, Vol. IV, New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, pp. 5-6.

²⁰ Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, p. 10.

²¹ R. C. Majumdar, H. C. Raychaudhuri and Kalikinkar Datta (1992), *An Advance History of India*, Lahore: Famous Books, p. 426.

²² Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, p. 126.

²³ Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta (1992), *An Advance History of India*, p. 427.

²⁴ B. V. Rao (1984), *World History*, Karnataka: Sterling Publishers, p. 183.

²⁵ Fakhar Bilal (2010), *Mansabdari System under the Mughals, 1574-1707*, Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Publishing, p. 12.

²⁶ Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta (1992), *An Advance History of India*, p. 430.

Hamayun bequeathed a rich empire from his father, but he was to take further essential steps for strengthening his hold. As per Ibn Khaldun's stages of *asabiyyah*, Babur and Hamayun period of the rule might be placed in the first stage of the establishment of royal authority. No doubt Babur established Mughal rule in India, yet it needed strenuous labor for consolidation. Meanwhile, Hamayun committed some glaring blunders which caused severe setbacks to the embryonic foundations of the Mughal Empire in India. Despite the others, he divided the empire among his brothers²⁷ and shared his authority with them: Kamran, Hindal, and Askari, which was the most gruesome blunder on his part. Not only this, but his own brothers also often revolted against him.²⁸ Since his empire was founded among groups of various backgrounds; therefore, the need of the hour was to unite them under a single authority and a single leader. In *Muqaddimah*, Khaldun stipulates that the leader himself should take all the charge and should exercise his authority over the rest. Moreover, politics require that only one person exercise control because various persons are liable to differ among each other and the destruction of the whole can result.²⁹ Whereas in the case of Hamayun, the situation was altogether reversed. He had scattered the royal authority in different hands.

Hamayun's cousins Muhammad Sultan and Muhammad Zaman were also a claimant to the throne.³⁰ Taking the advantage of Hamayun's plight and all-around confusion in the empire, Sher Shah Suri launched determined efforts to oust Hamayun from the Indian empire. A series of skirmishes took place between Sher Shah Suri and Hamayun and finally after numerous skillful, strategic, and diplomatic manipulations, Sher Shah defeated Hamayun in the battle of Bengal and the latter reached Agra, but there was no chance of taking a stand. He evacuated Agra and, after a halt at Delhi, rushed onto Lahore, followed in close pursuit by the Afghans. Lahore was abandoned. Humayun turned towards Sind, where he had no success. Ultimately, he reached 'Umarkot, where the ruler sheltered him. It was here that Akbar was born in 1542.³¹ Humayun could not stay long at 'Umarkot and decided to go to Qandahar. 'Askari, who was the governor of Qandahar on behalf of Kamran, did not let him enter. Humayun entered Persia as a refugee. Hamayun spent the next fifteen years in exile in Afghanistan, Persia, and Sindh.³²

Eventually, Farid Khan succeeded in throwing Hamayun out of India on 17 May 1540, and proclaimed himself sultan, with the title of Sher Shah. Suri established his rule over India and introduced very innovative reforms which not only earned him good fame at home and cheering appreciation abroad but also set a marvelous precedent for the coming generations to follow.³³ Nevertheless, his unexpected death in 1545³⁴ bereaved the Indians of a high stature statesman. Since the Indian empire and the state system was a reflector of the emperor's credential. If the person in the center was sound, things were going well and vice-versa. Suri left behind weak successors. Therefore, the fall of the pyramid of his reforms seemed quite imminent. His son Jalal Khan under the title of Islam Shah assumed powers on 26 May 1545, only after four days of his father's death.³⁵ Very soon rivalries broke out between Islam Shah and his brother Adil Suri. For securing his powers, Islam Shah committed phenomenally invidious atrocities against the nobles and the members of his own family. His extreme measures provoked the Niyazi tribe to revolt against him.³⁶ Ibn Khaldun believes that the bonds of unity among different elements of the population are wrecked due to the cut-throat competition among various contenders to power.³⁷ Islam Shah's suspicion of his nobles and the treatment he extended to them caused the loss of confidence and trust of his people in him. Thus, the group feeling of the Sur dynasty evaporated which paved the way for Hamayun to make fresh inroads to India. Since his exile Hamayun was in search of such a situation. Eventually, he regained the lost empire after the battle of Sirhind on 22 June 1555.³⁸

²⁷ Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, p. 21.

²⁸ Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, p. 41.

²⁹ Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, p. 132.

³⁰ Bilal (2010), *Mansabdari System under the Mughals*, p. 13.

³¹ P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis (eds.) (1970), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. 2A, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 39.

³² Bilal (2010), *Mansabdari System under the Mughals*, p. 13.

³³ Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, pp. 55-56.

³⁴ Bilal (2010), *Mansabdari System under the Mughals*, p. 14.

³⁵ Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, p. 58.

³⁶ Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, p. 59.

³⁷ Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change," p. 42.

³⁸ William Erskin (1994), *History of India under Humayun*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, p. 124.

The Second Stage of *Asabiyyah*

Hamayun's second time stay in India was too short to formulate a definite policy or any significant strategy of governance to bring under discussion here. After a few months in India, he died of falling from the stairs of his library. His son Akbar was crowned emperor at Kalanaur on 14 February 1556.³⁹ With the enthronement of Akbar, the *asabiyyah* of Mughals in India entered the second phase. The second stage is the one in which the ruler claims royal authority for himself, excludes them, gains complete control over his people, and prevents claimants from trying to have a share in it. He deserves all the glory for himself and takes much care to keep his people at distance and subdue them.⁴⁰ Interestingly, almost similar developments took place during Akbar's rule. In the initial days of Akbar, Bairam Khan was at the helm of affairs. Bairam Khan wielded his powers and influence for nearly four years. Akbar skillfully managed to get rid of possessive Bairam Khan by sending him on voluntary exile.⁴¹

Furthermore, he expanded the empire to a greater extent by annexing Gujrat in 1573, Bengal in 1580, Kabul in 1589, Kashmir in 1589, and Sindh in 1591.⁴² Mughal Empire in India witnessed the zenith of territorial expansion. Akbar said, "a monarch should ever intent on conquest, otherwise his neighbors rise in arms against him."⁴³ Machiavelli had analogous views about the territorial expansion of state by saying, "the state should either expand or expire."⁴⁴

Since the second stage of *asabiyyah* is marked by the erection of different institutions and substitution of group feelings by paid army and bureaucracy to carry out the ruler's wishes.⁴⁵ Thus, in the first place, Akbar continued the impressive reforms of Sher Shah Suri. Moreover, he introduced a series of other reforms which strengthened his hold over the empire. He divided the administration of the empire into two categories; the Central and Provincial.⁴⁶ He also founded a highly unified and systematized bureaucratic structure which is known as the *mansabdari* system. The most remarkable aspect of the system was the *mansab* (rank). The *mansab* indicated one's rank, payment, military position, status, and other obligations.⁴⁷ An efficient army was raised by bringing into use the meticulous techniques of Jalaluddin Khilji.

Interestingly, the imperial *harem* emerged as an institution in the Mughals state system. Earlier in Babur and Humayun regimes, both the emperors and their chroniclers seem to have been content with having few wives and a couple of concubines as the figures were modest, nowhere running into hundreds and thousands. On the contrary, the number of women in the imperial *harem* turns mind-boggling during the times of Akbar. For making political alliances, Fr. Monserrate gave 300 wives to Akbar in temporary marriages. However, Abul Fazl mentions the astonishing figure of 5,000 women in the *harem* of Akbar.⁴⁸ The number of women in one's *harem* was perceived as one of the main symbols of the state's grandeur and power.⁴⁹

After the death of Akbar, the empire passed on to his son Salim, succeeded to the throne on 3 November 1605, and assumed the title Nur-ud-Din Muhammad Jahangir Padshah Ghazi. The developments of the second stage of the *asabiyyah* maintained the same pace under the Jahangir. Though fond of pleasures, he was not devoid of military ambitions and therefore, unflinchingly continued his father's policy of conquest and annexation. One of the most fruitful achievements of Jahangir's reign was the consolidation of Mughal rule in Bengal.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Mewar, Kangra, Ahmadnagar, and Bijapur all submitted to his authority. He promulgated twelve edicts, which were ordered to be observed as a rule of conduct in his kingdom. Among others, prohibition of cesses (*zakat*), regulation about highway robbery and theft, prohibition of forcible seizure of property, general confirmation of *mansabs* and

³⁹ Erskin (1994), *History of India under Humayun*, p. 182.

⁴⁰ Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, p. 141.

⁴¹ Rao (1984), *World History*, p. 184.

⁴² I. H. Qureshi (1978), *Akbar: The Architect of the Mughal Empire*, Karachi: Ma'areef Limited, pp. 88-91.

⁴³ Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, p. 154.

⁴⁴ Fazli Wahid (2001), *Political Philosophies*, Peshawar: Taj Kutab Khana, p. 188.

⁴⁵ Wahid (2001), *Political Philosophies*, p. 187.

⁴⁶ Bilal (2010), *Mansabdari System under the Mughals*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ M. Akhtar Ali (1985), *The Apparatus of Empire*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Harbans Mukhia (2004), *The Mughals of India*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, p. 113.

⁴⁹ Mukhia (2004), *The Mughals of India*, p. 114.

⁵⁰ Sheikh Mohamad Ikram (1966), *Muslim Rule in India and Pakistan, 711-1858 A.C.*, Lahore: Star Book Depot, p. 313.

jagirs, prohibition of seizure of houses and cutting off the nose and ears of the criminals, building of hospitals and appointment of physicians to attend the sick, confirmation of *aima* land, etc. were some of the significant edicts which particularly helped to regulate the subjects lives and fortifying the political system.⁵¹ Jahangir tells us that his *mansab*, rank in the state's military-cum-bureaucratic hierarchy, was raised from 1000/200 to 3000/2000, a very impressive rise.⁵² Moreover, being a painter he possessed fine aesthetic taste and was a patron of art and literature. He was a great admirer of justice and practically implemented it in Indian Empire with the deliverance of fullest compensation to the aggrieved.⁵³ These measures coupled with his religious tolerance consolidated his power and strengthened Mughal rule over India considerably.

The Third Stage of Asabiyyah

The reign of Shah Jahan is rightly considered the splendor of the Great Mughals who formally ascended the throne on 6 February 1628. Dr. Saksena described his reign as an epoch itself. It was his reign where the power and wealth of Mughal India reached their zenith, and his reign is generally referred to as "the most glorious epoch in the medieval period."⁵⁴ The empire enjoyed a great amount of internal peace and the ruler had abundant leisure to satisfy his taste for the cultural pursuit.⁵⁵ The most ambitious military campaigns were undertaken in his time and the most gorgeous buildings were erected. In *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun says that the third stage is one of tranquility and leisure in which the fruit of royal authority is enjoyed: the things that human nature desires, such as, fame, the creation of lasting monuments, and acquisition of property. It is marked by big constructions, erecting large buildings, and spacious cities, presenting gifts to nobles from foreign nations, dispensing bounty to his-own people and tribal dignitaries.⁵⁶ The ruler builds up his strength and shows the way for those after him. The age of Shah Jahan is considered by some historians as the golden age in Mughal history on account of unprecedented territorial expansion and marvelous construction. Mughal architecture and art reached the height of their glory during his time.⁵⁷

As far as the territorial expansion of the Empire is concerned, Shah Jahan took stern action against the Golkonda and Bijapur which were always creating problems for the Mughals. Both Golkonda and Bijapur sued for peace, which was granted on the acceptance of the demands to pay an annual tribute, clearly recognize Mughal sovereignty, and cede the territories that had belonged to Ahmadnagar.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the Portuguese were involved in the obnoxious practice of kidnapping the children and selling them to slavery. Hugli in Bengal was their established operational zone where they carried out the activities with the help of natives and converts. In 1639 an expedition was sent which freed many slaves and forced the Portuguese to pay indemnity and evacuate the settlement.⁵⁹

Qandahar was restored to the Mughal Empire in 1638. Shah Jahan sent an expedition under the command of his son Murad Bakhsh who was later replaced by Aurangzeb, to recover their ancestral territories in Transoxania. Murad Bakhsh occupied Balkh and the Ozbegs were defeated. However, in 1648 Shah 'Abbas II intervened and demanded the evacuation of Qandahar and the restoration of Balkh to the Ozbegs. Thus, the Central Asian adventure came to a disastrous end.⁶⁰

Shah Jahan's artistic and architectural taste is a byword in the history of the Mughals. He had developed a special interest in the plans and designs of buildings and personally revised them. He had taken a large store of precious stones and gold from his treasury on his accession and ordered the construction of a peacock throne with a canopy, adorned with enamel and jewels. The throne remained one of the glories of the Mughal dynasty for a century until Nadir Shah sacked Delhi whilst taking it away.⁶¹ He also tried to refurbish and rebuild the existing apartments and palaces in the fort at Agra. The most attractive erection was the *Taj Mehal* at Agra to contain the tomb of his wife, of which he was the founder and

⁵¹ Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta (1992), *An Advance History of India*, p. 463.

⁵² Mukhia (2004), *The Mughals of India*, pp. 30-31.

⁵³ Mukhia (2004), *The Mughals of India*, pp. 469-472.

⁵⁴ Banarsi Prasad Saksena (1932), *History of Shahjahan of Delhi*, Lahore: Book Traders, p. 31.

⁵⁵ Ikram (1966), *Muslim Rule in India and Pakistan*, p. 319.

⁵⁶ Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, pp. 141-142.

⁵⁷ Saksena (1932), *History of Shahjahan of Delhi*, p. 237.

⁵⁸ Holt, Lambton and Lewis (1970), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, p. 48.

⁵⁹ Holt, Lambton and Lewis (1970), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, p. 49.

⁶⁰ Holt, Lambton and Lewis (1970), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, p. 50.

⁶¹ Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, p. 219.

the first to be begun in 1632.⁶² The Pearl Mosque constructed in 1646-53 in the fort at Delhi, delights the eyes by its majestic simplicity. Much has been written of the splendors of the fort at Delhi and the new city founded there in 1639.⁶³ Other huge buildings were constructed such as *Diwan-i-Khas*, the hall of private audience, *Diwan-i-Am*, the hall of a public audience. The halls both in Delhi and Agra were constructed in Shah Jahan's reign. The emperor used to appear in *Diwan-i-Am* at 7:40 am with which the business began and general aspects of the administration of the empire were discussed such as petitions, promotions, passing of orders, considering cases of destitution, etc. From *Diwan-i-Am* the Emperor went to *Diwan-i-Khas*-the hall of private audience. Here the ruler spent two hours and transacted such business that could not be done publicly for political or administrative reasons. From *Diwan--Khas* the Emperor went to *Shah Burj*-royal where a strictly secret council was held. Princes with the exception of four other officers none were allowed to enter. In *Shah Burj* secret decisions were taken and confidential orders were drafted.⁶⁴ *Shish Mahal*-the hall of mirrors, Shalimar Garden, Shah Jahan's paradise, was one of the first and the greatest of the Mughal gardens, the forerunners of many of the formal gardens in Europe.⁶⁵ The point over here we want to make is that Shah Jahan's reign was the era of relative peace, an abundance of wealth, and huge constructions. Will Durant who is far from partial to the Muslim rulers of India, remarked that "his thirty years of government marked the zenith of India's prosperity and prestige. The lordly Shah Jahan was a capable ruler."⁶⁶ On the contrary, Dr. Saksena maintains that "underneath his glittering array of pomp and magnificence, signs of decline are also noticeable, and the source of a large number of disastrous tendencies which culminated in a crash after the death of Aurangzeb, may with justice be traced to the reign of Shahjahan."⁶⁷

The Fourth Stage of Asabiyyah

Shah Jahan fell seriously ill in 1658 and was not able to govern the system of his empire anymore. Shah Jahan had four sons and Dara Shukoh was the eldest among them and the apparent heir to the throne as towards the end, his father left the administration of the state largely to him. Everyone pressed his claim to the throne; resultantly hectic warfare for succession took place among the brothers.⁶⁸ Interestingly, Aurangzeb and Dara Shukoh both sought the help of Marathas and other outside communities to overpower each other. In short, Aurangzeb emerged victorious in the wars of successions.⁶⁹ Here Ibn Khaldun's assumption comes very apt about the weakening of group feelings. Khaldun maintains that in the beginning, a ruler achieves power only with the help of his own people. With the passage of time, these feelings become feeble to the level that a ruler starts relying on friends against his own men. He deploys them to keep away and prevent his kin from seizing power.⁷⁰ Such incidents of mutual rivalries and conflicts are self-evident during the last days of Shah Jahan and afterward.

Moreover, Khaldun argues that the selfish execution of authority and power destroys the strength of *asabiyyah*, and society loses its confidence in its leader with the passage of time. The environment of trust which is created by *asabiyyah* is no longer there if the decision-making chambers become dominated by intrigue-ridden cliques.⁷¹ The ruler is good if he serves the interests of the common. He is bad if he is unjust and imposes severe punishment on them. If the ruler is lenient and overlooks the bad sides of his people, they will trust him and will take refuge with him. They love him and they are willing to die for him in the battle against his enemies.⁷² Since India was a land with heterogonous social strata and a variety of religious cults. Keeping in view the diverse background of the Indian polity, Akbar the Great was wise enough to introduce a religious toleration policy through which he succeeded in enlisting the support of various groups.⁷³ On the contrary, Aurangzeb enraged the different communities by following a harsh religious policy. He started a series of expeditions to suppress the

⁶² Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, p. 220.

⁶³ Burn (1987), *The Cambridge History of India*, p.223.

⁶⁴ Saksena (1932), *History of Shahjahan of Delhi*, pp. 241-242.

⁶⁵ Mathew Wilson (2003), *the Land of War Elephants: Travels beyond the Pale Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India*, United States: Nomad Press, pp. 45-46.

⁶⁶ Ikram (1966), *Muslim Rule in India and Pakistan*, p. 328.

⁶⁷ Saksena (1932), *History of Shahjahan of Delhi*, p. xxx.

⁶⁸ Ikram (1966), *Muslim Rule in India and Pakistan*, pp. 326-327.

⁶⁹ Bilal (2010), *Mansabdari System under the Mughals*, p. 48.

⁷⁰ Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, p. 146.

⁷¹ Muhammad (1998), "Ibn Khaldun Theory of Social Change," p. 43.

⁷² Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, p. 153.

⁷³ Rao (1984), *World History*, p. 185.

revolting tribes. His engagement in such campaigns against the people of his own empire caused a severe setback by diverting his attention from the state administration.⁷⁴

The Fifth Stage of *Asabiyyah*

The fifth of the Mughals *asabiyyah* starts with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. As usual, Aurangzeb's death was followed by a war of succession, in which his eldest surviving son Muazzam (Shah Alam) appeared successful and ruled till 1712.⁷⁵ Naturally, his concentration was focused on the preservation of his power and retention of his seat. Therefore, he paid lip services to the state administration or averting the ensuing decline of the Mughals dynasty. After his death, a similar war broke out among his sons. In 1713 Farrukhsiyar ascended the throne, but he found himself surrounded by the Sayyid brothers, who received the highest offices in the realm. Sayyid Hasan Ali became the *wazir* and accumulated all the powers in his hands.⁷⁶ Thus, Farrukhsiyar was dependent upon his courtiers. This sheer dependency and helplessness in the face of his cronies manifested into all-around confusion and his reign was marked by an eternal power struggle. His son, Muhammad Shah (Rangila) succeeded him. Though Muhammad Shah was only in his seventeenth year at the time of accession⁷⁷, however, he skillfully managed to get rid of the tightfisted Sayyid brothers but could not shun his excessive inclination to wine and women. Interestingly, he wore a female dress and surrounded himself with women, catamites, buffoons, and singers.⁷⁸ He ruled for almost thirty years, till 1748 but was interrupted by foreign invasions of Nadir Shah. By the time Mughals had lost the aptitude to repulse foreign invasions. Their internal division and character degeneration had reached the level to dispose of. Consequently, onward 1748, Ahmad Shah Abdali made frequent raids on India which reduced the Mughal empire in India to a vessel state. The combined invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah sucked the economy of India and worsened the elusive peace. The indigenous subject lost their faith in the ruling dynasty. Encouraged by the prevalent confusion, the European companies accelerated their heinous activities against the interest of the state. Finally, the East India Company got a heavy hand over India after defeating Shuja-ud-Daulah in the battle of Buxur in 1764.⁷⁹

The fifth stage is of squandering and waste. The ruler wastes pleasure and amusement in this stage. The ruler often entrusts the authority to unscrupulous persons who are not qualified to handle the authority. He loses many soldiers by spending their incentives and allowances on pleasures instead of paying them. He abandons supervising his military and subordinates. Thus, he tears down the foundations his ancestors had laid and ruins what they had built. In this stage, the dynasty is seized by senility and the chronic disease from which it can hardly ever rid itself, eventually, it is destroyed.⁸⁰

Interestingly, most of the above shortcomings rather evils, which have been mentioned in *Muqaddimah*, were present in the conundrums of later Mughals. They were not regularly paying to the soldiers. The rulers spent most of their time in *herems*. They lavishly spent money on merry making. State affairs were conducted by the mighty nobles. Most ruinous was the common tug of war among the nobles and in turn, they poisoned the ears of the despot against each other which detracted his attention from the much-needed assignments.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun believes that a dynasty rarely establishes itself in a land with so many different tribes and groups. This is because of differences in opinions and desires. At any time, therefore, there is much opposition to a dynasty and rebellion against it, because each group feeling under the control of the ruling dynasty thinks that it has in itself enough strength and power.⁸¹ Every party looks for a favorable opportunity to pursue their self-interests in contrast to the ruling elite's superstructure. The fact is that they have not wholeheartedly accepted their mastery over them, yet they have been subdued by dint of force. However, in the later years of Mughals in India, this show of force was missing with which they established this vast empire. In the course of history, we see that the Marathas, Sikhs, Rajputs, Jats, Afghans, and others often revolted against the Mughals in India and shattered their power

⁷⁴ Bilal (2010), *Mansabdari System under the Mughals*, p. 49.

⁷⁵ Ikram (1966), *Muslim Rule in India and Pakistan*, p. 371.

⁷⁶ Ikram (1966), *Muslim Rule in India and Pakistan*, p. 375.

⁷⁷ Sh. Abdur Rashid (1978), *History of the Muslims of Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent, 1707-1806*, Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, p. 72.

⁷⁸ Rashid (1978), *History of the Muslims of Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent*, p. 88.

⁷⁹ Rashid (1978), *History of the Muslims of Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent*, pp. 326-327.

⁸⁰ Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, p. 142.

⁸¹ Ibn Khaldun (1967), *The Muqaddimah*, p. 130.

and weakened it to the level that at the end the British took India easily by not only finding the natives hesitant to rescue Mughals rather the British rallied the natives against the Mughals.

Conclusion

Although most of today's scholars consider Khaldun's theory of *asabiyyah* as irrelevant and inapplicable as it dealt only with the nomadic tribal and dynastic systems of medieval times if seen critically it still plays a vital role in creating social cohesion among individuals, tribes, groups, cultures, and nations. Moreover, the hallmarks of astute leadership and the guiding principles he propounded for a ruling hierarchy are commendable. He has also cautioned the leader of some common evils that disrupt his authority such as misuse of power, violation of sacred trust, accumulation of wealth, hurting of religious sentiments of people, and upsetting the unity bonds. Likewise, religion as described by Khaldun is still an overlapping factor and a binding force for creating unity among the people. The best suitable example for religious *asabiyyah* can be quoted from Asian and Middle Eastern countries. The theory and its stages may not sound relevant in the present time but if one sees it in the context of that time, it provided golden and guiding principles for the growth of civilizations.

In a nutshell, Khaldun's theory of *asabiyyah* has a profound compatibility factor in understanding the phenomenon of the rise and fall of civilizations. The theory he propounded during the medieval time had greater relevance in the times. Therefore, it applied in its whole to the Arab World and in parts to other places and dynastic changes. Consequently, Khaldun's theory when applied to the Mughals in India, their rise and fall were better understood, and the stages of their rule were more convincing when seen through the spectrum of the theory of *asabiyyah*. Moreover, the geneses of the Mughal Empire, its growth and development, and its ultimate decline likewise stunningly validate Khaldun's *asabiyyah*. The common and overall finding is that whenever a group loses its feelings of common bondage, common interests, or becomes a victim of disunity among themselves; it often undergoes the above course of events till its eventual decline. The Mughals thus experienced the same processes and finally faced disintegration by losing the Indian Empire to the British.

Fragments

Principalities that lived under their own laws before they were annexed

There are three courses for those states which have been acquired as stated have been accustomed to living under their own laws and in freedom and who wish to hold them. Firstly, to ruin them, second is to reside there in person, thirdly, to permit them to live together according to their own laws, drawing a tribute, and establishing within it an oligarchy which will keep it friendly to them. Because such a government knows that it cannot stand without the prince's friendship and interest and does its utmost struggle to support him. Therefore, he who would keep a city with prevailing freedom will keep it more easily by the means of its own citizens than in any other way.⁸²

“A wise man ought always to follow the paths followed earlier by great men, and act to imitate those who have been supreme, so that if his ability does not equal theirs, at least it will savor of it.”⁸³

On Mercenary Soldiers

Good laws and good arms are the major foundations of all states and if a state is not well armed, it indicates that there are not good laws devised and implemented, and vice versa. We shall speak of the arms and would leave the laws out of the discussion. For instance, the arms with which a prince defends his state are either the mercenaries, or his own, auxiliaries, or mixed. Mercenaries and auxiliaries are dangerous and useless; and if one holds his state based on these arms, he will stand neither safe nor firm; for they are ambitious, disunited, and indisciplined, unfaithful, cowardly before both friends and enemies; they have neither the fear of fidelity to men nor God, and destruction is deferred only so long as the attack is; for in war, they are robbed by the enemy and in peace by these mercenaries and auxiliaries. The fact is, they fight in the field for a trifle of stipend wherein they have no other reason or attraction for keeping the field, and that stipend is not sufficient to make them willing to die for you.

⁸² W. K. Marriott (trans.) (2001), *The Prince of Niccolo Machiavelli*, Pennsylvania State University: Electronic Classics Series, p. 27

⁸³ Marriott (2001), *The Prince of Niccolo Machiavelli*, p. 28.

They are ready enough to be your soldiers during peacetime but take themselves off or run from the foe if war comes.⁸⁴

Concerning the Secretaries of Princes

To a prince, the choice of servants is of little importance, and they are good or not according to the discrimination of the prince. The first opinion which one forms of a prince and his understanding is by observing the men he has around him; and when they are faithful and capable, he may always be considered wise, because he has known how to recognize the capable and to keep them faithful. But when they are otherwise one cannot form a good opinion of him, for the prime error which he made was in choosing them.⁸⁵

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⁸⁴ Marriott (2001), *The Prince of Niccolo Machiavelli*, p. 51.

⁸⁵ Marriott (2001), *The Prince of Niccolo Machiavelli*, p. 89.

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