

## **BOOK REVIEW**

**SULTAN ZAHOOR AKHTAR, *KAI GOHARNAMA*** (RAWALPINDI: SARFRAZ ALI KIANI, JEIA GRAPHICS, 2004)

With the advent of postmodernist discourse, the discipline of history has broadened its scope extending itself from macro to micro level. The book under discussion is relevant to the extent that it highlights the history of the valiant tribe of Ghakhars who ruled Pothohar region of the Punjab for about eight centuries. The work is divided into three parts. Whereas the first two parts were written in Persian prose and poetry by Raizada Dhuni, his son Brij Nath, and one of their descendents Rattan Chand respectively, the third part has been written by Col. (R) Sultan Zahoor Akhtar who happens to be translator of the first two parts as well. First two parts were written during the late Mughal period and Sikh rule in Punjab covering the period from the advent of Ghakhars in the region in 10<sup>th</sup> century to 1726 and from 1726 to 1820 respectively.

Ghakhars' origin in the region is controvertible but the work under discussion traces it to the times of Sultan Mahmood of Ghazna who awarded the Pothohar region to Ghakhar Shah (KaiGohar II), son of Kabul Shah. Originally, Ghakhars belonged to Isphaan (Iran) and settled in Indian Subcontinent in 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. However, the famous historian Farishta argued in his work that Ghakhars came from Kanauj (Rajistan). During Ghaznavi's invasions, Sultan was attacked by these Ghakhars, numbered in 30,000, and was almost defeated. In the same work Farishta stated that they embraced Islam owing to one Moez-ud-Din Ghorī who, ironically, was killed by the Ghakhars.

Ghakhars remained an independent tribe for the eight centuries playing historic role during the course of history. Their collaboration with Mahmood of Ghazna, and later on their opposition to Behlol Lodhi constitute the period of valour and gallantry in their history. Adam Khan, brother of Sarang Khan (Ghakhar ruler) supported Zaheer-ud-Din Baber in latter's inroads against Lodhis and, consequently, got Mughal decree for their rule in the area. When Humayun was defeated and Sur dynasty established its foothold, Ghakhars remained defiant against Sher Shah Suri and his descendent Ismael Shah. During the Battle of Rawat in 1542, the Afghans were annihilated and suffered heavy casualties at the hand of Adam Khan. Their support for the Mughals did not swerve and when Humayun defeated Kamran in Afghanistan, Adam Khan invited the former to attack *Sur* dynasty. From 1021 AD to 1562 AD, the Ghakhars had never submitted to the kings of India, Khurasan, and Sindh. However, from 1562 to the Sikh period, Ghakhars lost many battles, fought internecine wars and suffered a great deal. In fact, Col. (R) Zahoor Akhtar deplors his tribe for their mutual bickering and ascribes their subsequent decline to their disunity. They clashed with Mughal forces sporadically and suffered a lot too. One Sultan Mukarram Khan defected the Mughal court and invited Nadir Shah Irani to attack India. He also married his son off to the daughter of Nadir Shah as well. The same Sultan Mukarram Khan lent his support to Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1747 AD and accompanied the latter as cavalry force commander on practically all of his Indian expeditions. Meanwhile, he also annexed Kashmir to his state. Later on, he was made Governor of the territories upto Lahore by Ahmed Shah Abdali. Nevertheless, the rising influence of Sikhs checked his advance and confined the Ghakhars to Pothohari region.

During the Sikh rule, Maharaja Ranjit Singh made attempts against Ghakhar area but his efforts ended in futility. Soon Punjab was conquered by the British and Ghakhars enjoyed prosperous living under them. The last part of the book is merely an addendum with little significance. Post 1826 period has been discussed very briefly and, unlike the previous two parts, there is dearth of fecundity of thought in the last one. For instance, the translator cum author discussed the above said period in just twenty six pages, although its relevance outbids that of previous ones. Furthermore, his narrative holds no account of Ghakhars' contribution towards British Rule and Freedom Movement which imparts an impression as if Ghakhars were sunk into oblivion for the aforesaid period of history.

It would not be wrong to put it as a book which traces family tree more and is less a profound historical narrative. The author has provided the valuable information regarding different branches of the main tribe, and has given the names of Ghakhars who hold pivotal positions in different walks of life. However, there are several spelling and grammatical mistakes in the book which depreciate its impression on the reader. The intriguing aspect of the book is Persian and Pothohari poetry which embellish its impact. This reminds one of *Shahnama* by Firdousi whose pattern has been followed in the first two parts. On the whole one can regard the book as a good pastime. Otherwise, its significance ends with it being just a reference book for Ghakhars' history. The work under review could have been improved by providing more insights into the Ghakhars' role during British Raj, and making it more analytical in its approach to the topic concerned.

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