

## Chapter – 71

## Ahmad Shah Abdali

(1723 - 1773 AD)

Ahmad Shah belonged to Sadu Zai tribe, a branch of Popal Zai Abdali tribe of Afghanistan. That is why he is called Ahmad Shah Abdali. Ahmed Khan was born in Multan. Because of this, even today a road in Multan is called Abdali Road. Ahmad Shah belonged to a linguistic group of western Afghanistan called Pashtun. There were Sufi elders in this family whom they were proud of. It is said that among the Sufi elders there was a great Sufi whose name was Abdal, from which the tribe began to call themselves as "Abdali".

There are two major branches of the Abdali tribe. The first branch is called Zark and they are mainly settled in the Kandahar area. They include 'Ali Barak Zai and Achak Zai. The last king of Afghanistan, Muhammad Zahir Shah, who ruled here from 1933AD to 1973AD, belonged to the same Barak Zai group. Its other branch is called Panj Pao, which includes the Noor Zai, 'Ali Zai, Ishaq Zai and Sak Zai communities. These people live in and around Herat.

Ahmad Khan's family was previously settled in Herat. At that time, his family made an attempt to free his area from the Iranian rule, for which Ahmad Khan's father was in the front. But in 1728AD he was forced to accept the obedience of Nadir Shah. After some time Ahmed Khan along with his brother Zulfikar Khan revolted against Nadir Shah, but this time he also failed. However, Nadir Shah appointed Ahmed Khan into his

army, realizing the abilities of the Abdali community. He also allowed the Abdali people to settle in Kandahar. Ahmad Khan, with his extraordinary abilities, advanced as a soldier to the rank of commander of Nadir Shah's army.

In 1747AD, Nadir Shah was assassinated by the Qizalbash tribe in Khorasan. After that, Kandahar and Herat people chose Ahmad Khan as their chief. And then Ahmed Khan became "Ahmad Shah". After sitting on the throne, Ahmad Shah took the title of "Dur Durran" (*meaning pearl of pearls*). Thus, the foundation of the Durrani rule was laid.

Shortly after assuming power, Ahmad Shah occupied Ghazni, Kabul and Peshawar, in addition to Kandahar. By 1750AD, he established his control over western Herat, Mashhad and Nishapur. Ahmad Shah was considering himself as the legal heir of Nadir Shah's eastern kingdom, i.e., the territories of India that Nadir Shah had acquired from the Mughal. With this view, he also made several attacks on India between 1747AD to 1769AD. However, he never intended to establish his regular rule over India.

The first three battles of Ahmad Shah Abdali in India took place in 1748AD, 1749AD and 1751AD respectively, through Moin ul-Mulk, the Governor of Punjab, deputed by Mughal Government. After each battle, Ahmad Shah retained Moin ul-Mulk as the Governor of Lahore and returned to Afghanistan himself. After the death of Moin ul-Mulk, Emad ul-Mulk replaced him, but his loyalty turned out to be associated with the Mughal Ruler. On listening to this situation, Ahmad Shah was compelled to reach India for the fourth time. This time Ahmed Shah extended his victory up to Delhi. This time, before returning to Kandahar, Ahmad Shah handed over the responsibility of Delhi to Najib ud-Daulah, and in Punjab he made his own son Taimur as his Deputy.

In those days, the power of Marathas in India started to increase. Among them, those who were suffered by their aggression include not only the Rajputs and Hindus but also the Muslims from different regions of India. Moreover, the Marathas started a campaign to break Ahmed Shah's rule from Delhi and Punjab. So, Ahmad Shah again had to come to India to rectify this. In 1761AD a large battle between the Afghans and the Marathas took place at the place named, Panipat. In this war though the Marathas fought to their best but they could not stand any longer and faced defeat against Ahmad Shah.

Ahmed Shah's victory in Panipat not only protected his areas but also had derivative far-reaching results in the region. This led to the break of the intense power of Marathas in India. After that the different nations, especially Muslims, breathed at ease. However, even after this event, Ahmed Shah's battle with the Sikhs continued, for which he had to travel to India several times.

Till the death of Ahmad Shah Abdali, his empire had spread from Amu to Indus River and from Tibet to Khorasan. His tomb is in Kandahar that still reminds us for him.