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AHMAD NABI KHAN

SHĀH ABU'L MA'ĀLĪ
A TURBULENT AND DISCREDITED NOBLE
OF THE MOGHUL COURT*

Kings and kingdoms often pay dearly for their favouritism and frivolity. Sometimes, the phenomena play havoc with their existence, more dangerous than hidden jealousies or open enmities from within or from without; favourite commanders and favoured slaves often bring death and destruction to their patrons and benefactors.

The history of the Moghul empire is not, likewise, deficient of such episodes. While Kāmṛān's faithless activities brought an end to the first phase of the Moghul rule in Hindustan, though for a time Akbar had to pay heavily for the excesses of his favourite *atāliq* and great comrade, Bairām Khān Khānkhānān. One of such episodes which created a real stir among the nobles of the empire involved the tenderness of Humāyūn who made a petty personal servant of him, so careless and cruel that he once occupied Lahore by force to act as its governor against the Emperor's wish and, later on, planned to turn over a sovereign ruler, successor of his own master. Still later, he strangled one of his master's queens in order to occupy Kabul and rule it independently.

The historical personality was Shāh Abu'l Ma'ālī whose frivolous activities have been mentioned in extenso by almost every contemporary and near-contemporary historian of the period. Gulbadan Begum, Jauhar Āftābchī, Bāyazīd Bayāt, Abu'l Faẓl, Badā'ūni, Firishta, Nizām al-Din, and many others related his adventures and adversities at length till the time he was executed at Kabul under the orders of Muḥammad Ḥakīm Mirza.

Sometime in September 1545, while Humāyūn was staying at Kabul,

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