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### **Abstract**

In terms of power and position Asaf Khan belonged to a noble family. He joined the service of Jahangir during 1611 immediately after Jahangir's marriage with Nur Jahan. Asaf Khan within a short period attracted the attention of Jahangir. Asaf Khan became one of the close associates of the Emperor and fully established his influence and proved to be as one of the most loyal officials of Jahangir.

Asaf Khan played a very significant role during the reign of two great Mughal Emperors namely Jahangir and Shahjahan. Despite it he has not received due attention of the modern historians. His life and role in polity has been examined to a great extent only in the context of the power and position of his sister Nur Jahan. From the reading of Beni Prasad's work and his theory of so-called '*Nur Jahan Junta*' it appears that Nur Jahan's relation with Jahangir was the only reason for providing ample opportunity to a raise in the position of Asaf Khan and other members of her family. But the promotion to the high ranks and appointment to the high administrative posts of her father and brother Asaf Khan and other should not entirely be seen in this context. The position of the family of Nur Jahan during the so called '*Nur Jahan Junta*' period (1611-1621) was also largely determined by the political expediency of the Mughal Empire. Contrary to this, if we carefully study the early years of Jahangir's reign we find that most of the expeditions failed due to the inexperienced nobles who had been created and rapidly promoted by Jahangir to counter the old and experienced nobles of Akbar. Successive failures of the Mughals at different fronts forced Jahangir to realize the importance of those nobles who had been neglected by this time due to their dubious role during his accession crisis. The result was that Itimad-ud Daulah and Asaf Khan along with some other was nobles, were recognized by Jahangir for their services to the Mughal Empire. A thorough study of the developments taking place at the Mughal court and the empire and the role played by Asaf Khan during the period of Jahangir clearly indicates that at

different times he stood firm independently and that he had his own following and supporters.

Besides, he had a good quality in managing state affairs. His close association with Jahangir and later on with Shahjahan further strengthened his position and influence at the Mughal court. In 1622, he received the prestigious post of *wakil* which he enjoyed till his death in 1641. After his death designation of *wakil* disappear from the history of Mughal administration. As a *wakil* he enjoyed various powers and privileges in the Mughal court. He acted as a personal advisor to both the emperors. Mughal Emperor rarely paid visits to their nobles' houses. Also would rarely go to those families which were in matrimonial alliance with the royal house. It was Asaf Khan whose house was frequently visited by both the Emperors. He organized lavish feasts and banquets in honour of the Emperor and arranged them in a very nice way.

He had also interest in undertaking construction of dwellings and, gardens for his own use and *eidgahs*, *sarais* and wells for the public welfare. Nishat Bagh is one of the finest gardens of Kashmir was built by him. Asaf Khan had keen interest in trade and commerce. He was also engaged in foreign trade and maintained ship for the purpose of trade.

Here an attempt has been made to prepare a biography of Asaf Khan to understand the power and position enjoyed by him in a long span of three decades. It is unfortunate that the most powerful man (after the Emperor) remained a neglected figure and no significant work has been done on his life and achievements till date.