CHAPTER 2
MUGHAL COURT POLITICS:
PERSONALITIES AND POLICIES 1707-65

Section A
FACTIOUS PARTIES AND PARTY
POLITICS (1707-65)

A principal characteristic of the history of the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century was party or group politics. Its nature was, however, different from that of the personal groups centring round a particular person under the early Mughals in India. During the time of the Great Mughals, personal considerations sometimes led ambitious and rebellious princes and nobles like Kamran, the Mirzas, Mirza Hakim, Khusrau, Mahabat Khan and others, to form a group or coterie with their supporters. But usually such attempts were nipped in the bud and did not envelop the entire court. In the time of Jahangir, however, the waters of the court were seriously troubled on account of the machinations of Nurjahan junta in the Khurram-Shariyahr rivalry. Under Shahjahan, again, the see-saw of court politics pulsated with the dominance of Aurangzeb or Dara in imperial counsels particularly with regard to Golkonda and Bijapur. But in such moves the nobility as such played a secondary role, because the emperors were strong. Towards the end of Aurangzeb’s reign, two groups of nobles, Irani and Turani, were already raising their heads, and seeking to come to the forefront in the Mughal court. The Barha Sayyids were there, of course, but Aurangzeb had a poor opinion of them. After his death the controlling and unifying machinery went out of order with the practical
abeyance of monarchy. So the importance of parties or groups grew out of all proportions. Party or group rivalry came to dominate the Mughal court politics. It now came to be moulded more by the character of the nobles than by that of the rulers. In fact the emperors were largely responsible for this state of affairs because they were weak. They could neither govern themselves, nor did they possess the power to judge the right persons who could become worthy and honest officers and ministers. They were often influenced by selfish men, depraved eunuchs, flatterers and women in their administrative actions to change their opinions and even ministers. Hence the sluggard and foolish emperor was no longer "the master or the guide of the nobility", who tried to dominate the court or the provinces.

This party politics can hardly be compared with the party government in a purely democratic state. Unlike modern political parties there was no common principle of work or firm party obligations in the Mughal court parties. The underlying principle in a modern established democratic state is service to the country and the people. Here what mattered was the selfish coterie, fed by family honour or religious affinity and blinded by self-interest, whose aim was not to secure the welfare of the country but their own gain and promotion. So the rise of a few groups among the nobles exercised a potent influence on the administrative framework, political and military history. It was the natural instinct of self-preservation which tempted the nobles to form such groups, and keep the governmental machinery under themselves, and strengthen their own respective groups with the provincial governor, military commander and obedient feudal nobles and courtiers. This was, again, inter-linked with the character of the party divisions or groups. It is, therefore, necessary to have a knowledge of the character and composition of the political parties and their role in shaping the destinies of the state.
Broadly speaking the nobles of the later Mughal court were divided down to 1720 into three principal groups:

(i) The Hindusthani party included those born in India or long settled here, e.g. many Afghan nobles, the Sayyids of Barha, as well as Khan-i-Dauran whose family came from Badakhshan. The nobles of this group largely depended on the support of their Hindu friends. The Hindusthanis were inferior in ability and intellect and were jealous and cherished ‘half-veiled but futile hostility’ towards the two other parties, the Iranis and the Turanis. The Afghans were not prominent in Indian politics down to 1748, notwithstanding their numerical strength in the army.

(ii) The foreign nobles, collectively called ‘Mughals’ or Mughalia, were subdivided into two groups according to the country of their origin. One of them, the Turanis, came from Turan or Transoxiana and other parts of Central Asia. They were mostly Sunnis. They enjoyed much influence and power as fellow countrymen of the ruling race, the Mughals, and formed a large proportion of the army. The Turani leaders were highly distinguished both as generals and civil administrators.

(iii) The other foreign group was of the Irani nobles, coming mostly from Persia and Khurasan and they were mainly Shias. The Iranis excelled in civil administration, especially in revenue and secretariat work. But being Shias they were in a minority and their influence in the state was less except when their leaders were in power.

At first sight it would appear that race and religion constituted the basis of rivalry. But this division was not wholly exclusive. Even in one group there were members of other groups. Hence this differentiation was not entirely based on religious or racial differences.

The leading figures in the Irani group were Alamgiri nobles: (i) Muhammad Ibrahim (b. 1625-26), entitled Asad Khan (1654), Wazir-ul-mamalik (1685). His family had migrated to India in Jahangir’s time. He was highly respected on account of his rank, position, ability and
family considerations, marrying Asaf Khan’s daughter. In the time of Bahadur Shah he was appointed Vakil-i-mutlaq representing the emperor. (ii) Zulfiqar Khan, the son of Asad Khan (b. 1649), entitled Nusrat Jang, the Bakhshi-ul-mamalik or imperial paymaster since 1702 had already proved his mettle in the Jinji campaign (1690-98) and was deputy governor of Hyderabad (1704-5). He came to have strong association with the Deccan and the Marathas. By 1707 both these nobles occupied two leading posts in the court holding the ranks respectively of 7,000 and 6,000. They were also highly influential. Zulfiqar was also a successful general. He was supported by Daud Khan Panni, Rao Dalpat Bundela, Rao Ram Singh Hara, all distinguished soldiers. This Irani group was very powerful and influential but it was not a racial group. Both Asad and Zulfiqar were Persians born in India. It was ‘a family-cum-personal’ group, bound by family ties and personal relations of supporters. There was no clearly defined political programme of this group, except that Zulfiqar was interested in Shahu and in negotiating with the Marathas. Again he was favourably disposed towards the Hindus and his close association with the Bundela and Hara Rajputs was very significant.

Among the Turani group the leading figures were (i) Ghaziuddin Firuz Jang, (ii) his son Chin Qilich Khan (later Nizam-ul-Mulk), (iii) Hamid Khan, uncle of Chin Qilich, and (iv) Muhammad Amin Khan, second cousin of Chin Qilich. Ghaziuddin’s father came to India in the time of Shahjahan, and he himself came to India about 1668-9 and was appointed governor of Berar, 1698. He had distinguished himself in Aurangzeb’s wars with the Rajputs and the Marathas. Chin Qilich Khan (born 1671) rose to the emperor’s confidence on account of his military ability and also wise counsel and appointed governor of Bijapur (1700). Muhammad Amin Khan was appointed Sadr (minister in charge of religious endowment) in order to check the Iranis. Though some
scholars object to this view, it is undoubted that the nobles of the Turani group called ‘Chin’ group enjoyed much power, importance and respect. In character the Turani group was ‘a racial-cum-family group’. The leading members came from Turan and they patronised and had Turanis as their followers. So the Turanis were more cohesive than the Irani group. But a serious drawback of the Turanis was that the relation between Firuz Jang and Chin Qilich Khan was strained and Firuz Jang was blind.

There was longstanding rivalry between the Irani and the Turani groups for power and position at the court. Both Zulfiqar and Chin Qilich Khan were ambitious to seize supreme power. At first the Irani group was superior not only in power and influence but also in prestige. The combined mansabs of the first few Irani nobles totalled 24,500/24,000, while those of the Turani group only 20,000/15,600. This rivalry between the Iranis and the Turanis did not, however, stand in the way of their combing against the Hindusthanis. But after the fall of the latter, the former two confronted each other fiercely.

Ideas and Attitudes: During the period 1707-13, covering the reigns of Bahadur Shah and Jahanar Shah, the Irani party was strong with Asad Khan Vakil and Zulfiqar Khan at first Mir Bakhshi and then Wazir (1712-13). Zulfiqar initially joined Azam during the struggle with Bahadur but deserted him. He was favourably disposed towards the Marathas securing the release of Shahu in 1707 and also towards the Hindus. He was instrumental in the accession of Jahanar. As Wazir he tried to monopolise power in his own hands. But owing to differences with Kokaltash, foster brother of Jahanar, he did not exert himself against Farrukhssiyar in 1713.

From the accession of Farrukhssiyar in 1713 to the first year of Muhammad Shah’s reign (1720) the Hindusthani party remained in power under the Sayyid brothers. Without attempting to monopolise power the Hindusthani Sayyids sought the cooperation of the Alamgiri
nobles. But their pro-Hindu, pro-Maratha policy and their friction with the emperor led to a reaction against them on the ground of their policy being anti-Islamic and anti-monarchical. But they lost their ascendancy in 1720 as a result of the combination of the Iranis and the Turanis.

During the war of succession after Aurangzeb's death, the Turanis held aloof from Azam and deserted Kam Bakhsh. They remained in the background in the time of Bahadur Shah. They also deserted Rafi-us-Shan in the civil war against Jahandar in 1712. In the contest between Jahandar and Farrukhsiyar, too, they were bribed by the latter and remained passive at Samugarh. The Sayyid brothers gave important posts to the Turanis: Muhammad Amin Khan was appointed second Mir Bakhshi and given the titles of Itimad-ud-daula Nusrat Jang; his son, Qamaruddin, became paymaster of the ahadis; Chin Qilich Khan Bahadur (son of Ghaziuddin Firuz Jang), entitled Nizam-ul-Mulk was appointed viceroy of the Deccan with headquarters at Aurangabad and with his deputies in the six provinces thereof.

**Influence of Party Divisions on Politics**: The inter-party rivalry and conflict became a marked feature of the Mughal court politics. But its effects were not confined to the court only. The entire life of the state,—political, administrative, military,—became utterly corrupt and inefficient. As a result the society also became disorderly and went out of gear. Conditions became anarchical. The ambitious leaders of each party tried to secure their own personal supremacy and selfish interests and so the party conflicts adversely affected the interests of the state and accelerated the downfall of the empire. A few examples are given below:

(1) A noble wanted to organise his own block of supporters against his rivals and also sometimes against the king. But often no group was strong enough to dominate the others. The position of every Wazir was unstable. He wanted to maintain his own interests but his politics were
opposed by other groups. Even the post of Wazir lost its
charm and a noble like the Nizam (Chin Qilich Khan) preferred to leave the court. Thus the nobles who could
have imparted vigour and energy to the state became the
principal agents in its disintegration.

(2) The lack of direction and firm action in imperial
policy was the most disastrous effect of party politics.
The emperor being weak, imperial politics became
indecisive. The leading nobles quarrelled over the imperial
policy. Munim Khan and Zulfiqar Khan pursued opposite
policies at the same time towards the Rajputs. So the
Rajput policy of Bahadur Shah ended in failure. Again
there was difference between the policies towards Baji
Rao Peshwa among the war party of Qamaruddin and the
peace-party of Khan-i-Dauran and no bold policy towards
the Marathas became possible. Further before the battle
of Karnal (1739) the inactivity of the Turani party, led by
the Nizam, was a glaring instance of the effect of party
politics in the military field. The defence of Lahore was
neglected during the third invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali
(1752). Safdar Jang did nothing notwithstanding the
order of the emperor.

(3) Thirdly, a logical corollary of party politics was
that it was not possible to follow a long term policy or to
reform the administration. The policy of one group was
suspected by another and with the fall of that party it was
abandoned. The conciliatory policy of the Hindusthani
party of the Sayyids was criticised by the Turani party of
the Nizam as being anti-Islamic, and was used against
them. Khan-i-Dauran opposed the independent exclusive
policy of the Nizam. Hence no problem could be solved;
it was only shelved. No Wazir dared follow a bold policy
of reform against vested interests lest a large section of the
nobles became antagonised. Munim Khan was afraid to
make proper enquiry into the suitability of the appointees,
who had been given land by Bahadur Shah. The Sayyids
deemed it prudent to remain aloof from administration. So-
the administration was thrown into confusion. Similarly by checking lavish grants of jagirs Zulfiqar Khan incurred the hostility of other groups. The party clashes also affected the jagirdari system. On coming to power a new group re-allotted jagirs among its adherents and gave concessions to other groups to win their support. Land became more and more scarce. Group rivalry also increased and the process thus moved in a vicious circle.

After the fall of the Sayyids the Turani party became powerful during 1720-48. Three Turanis successively held the office of Wazir, Muhammad Amin Khan, Nizam-ul-Mulk and Qamaruddin Itimad-ud-Daula II. But Muhammad Shah wanted to curb the Turanis. So after some time their power was on the wane. To reduce Hamid Khan’s influence Muhammad Shah deputed Sarbuland Khan and Girdhar Bahadur to Gujrat. Hamid Khan had to take shelter with his nephew, the Nizam. Qamaruddin was dismissed from Wizarat and succeeded by Raushan-ud-Daula. A Turanian partisan, Abdul Ghafur, was punished for bribery.

On the other hand the Irani party was led first by Saadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk (d. March, 1739) and then by his nephew and son-in-law, Abul Mansur Khan Safdar Jang, governor of Awadh.

Mughal history from 1736 onwards was to a large extent the history of conflict between Irani and Turani parties. In 1736 when the emperor wanted to make peace with Baji Rao, the Turanis opposed any compromise. The exorbitant claims of the Peshwa led the emperor to seek the cooperation of the Nizam.

During Nadir Shah’s invasion the emperor, warned by the invader, grew suspicious of the Nizam and the Turanis. Wazir Qamaruddin was proposed to be replaced by Umdat-ul-Mulk. At Nizam’s advice the Wazir resigned and joined him. The Nizam, who had been preparing to go to the Deccan, postponed his departure. When Baji Rao died, the Turani party secured the appointment of
Azimullah Khan as governor of Malwa. But he was disgraced.

In 1739 Amir Khan II Umadat-ul-Mulk, son of Amir Khan I, governor of Kabul in Aurangzeb’s reign, and Ishaq Khan, both Shias and belonging to the Irani party, conspired to hurl the Turani leaders, Wazir Qamaruddin and Bakhshi Nizam-ul-Mulk, from power. But the plot leaked out. The weakness of the character of Muhammad Shah stood revealed. Amir Khan, who had expected to be the Wazir, could not get the post. The Irani conspirators were expelled from the court (1740). But the influence of the Turanis diminished from 1744. Persian influence increased in the court as Amir Khan and Safdar Jang (Nawab of Awadh) again grew powerful. Shuja-ud-Daula, son and heir of Safdar Jang, was married, under imperial direction, to the sister of Ishaq Khan II, Najm-ud-Daula, son of Ishaq Khan I. But in 1745 the distinguished Irani leader, Asad Yar Khan, died. Amir Khan was also killed in 1746. His body could not be cremated for four days as the salaries of the soldiers were in arrears for 14 months.

It was this party conflict which was the chief reason for the downfall of Safdar Jang. He was an Irani Shia. To counter his group Intizam-ud-Daula (Subahdar of Ajmer), son of the old Wazir Qamaruddin, built up a strong Turani Sunni group in cooperation with Ghaziuddin and Nasir Jang Nizam-ud-Daula, the two sons of his sister’s husband, Nizam-ul-Mulk. When Salabat Jang, assisting Safdar, was dismissed from the post of Mir Bakhshi, it was first given to Ghaziuddin. Later on he was appointed Subahdar of the Deccan after the murder of Nasir Jang. Safdar Jang was completely isolated. After 1765 the Nawab of Awadh came to be in the pay of the English. The Nizam, too, was in the Deccan. But the party conflict continued to reign in the Mughal court as before. But now it were the Afghans and the distinguished daring leaders of other races who came forward to join in the race for power.
## Chart to Illustrate Party Politics

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<td>Asad Khan</td>
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<td>7. Muhammad Shah</td>
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Section B

THE PROBLEM OF PERSONAL EQUATION

1. Decline in the Character of the Monarch

Personal equation largely determines the character of a despotism. The age of the 'Great Mughals' ended with the death of Aurangzeb. Thereafter began the age of 'Later Mughals', who may as well as classed as 'Lesser Mughals'. What Einhard, the contemporary historian of the Carolingian empire, wrote about the period after the death of Charlemagne, is equally applicable to the Mughal Empire after the death of Aurangzeb in the eighteenth century: 'Formerly there were kings, now there are only kinglets'. The weak, effeminate, vacillating, vicious and despicable character of the later Mughal emperors and their utter lack of discernment and administrative capacity were largely responsible for the pervading political vaccum and resultant chaos. In the first place, the emperors were either unable or unwilling to govern. The suspicious nature and overcentralisation of Aurangzeb had deprived his sons, acting as provincial governors, of administrative capacity and initiative. Bahadur Shah (62) was, of course, active and free from some of the worst vices of most of his successors, but he was negligent in administrative matters. Abhorring the strain of administration, lacking all sense of responsibility, power of independent judgment and devoid of strength of character and the ability to act promptly, the sluggish, dullard and foolish rulers of the eighteenth century did engage themselves in goverment and war but found solace in wine, women, buffoons and flattering sycophants. They became either helpless or dependent on others,—nobles, ministers and favourites of both sexes. Some of the latter were no doubt able and experienced, others were not. In such a situation,
a ruler, if wise, would leave the administration under able ministers, which in turn made other ministers envious; if foolish, he would resort to intrigue to supplant an overmighty minister only to come under the clutches of another.

In the second place, the emperors lacked the royal power of judging human character and failed to find out who was who. Sadullah Khan, the wise Wazir, held: ‘No age is wanting in able men; it is the business of wise masters to find them out, win them over and get work done by means of them, without listening to the calumnies of selfish men against them.’ The later Mughal emperors could not select the right type of Wazirs and officers and train them properly. They lent an easy ear to the whispering machinations or yielded to the perennial pressure or advice of scheming selfish and debased followers, slavish flatterers and eunuchs and used to change officers and governors to get ‘more money or greater servility’, decide or modify their own opinions or procedure of action.

In such an atmosphere one and all were guided more by their own interests of self-aggrandisement than by those of the state or of the monarchy. Feeling that the court was no longer safe for life, property, family honour even for those rendering devoted service, many nobles left the court and established their own principalities in the provinces, which ensured their personal safety and welfare of the people alike. Thus the Mughal state lost its direction like a boat without a steersman. The break-up and decline in administrative organization and deficiency in the art and conduct of war was axiomatic.

Interesting light on the nature of contemporary Mughal monarchy is thrown by the following incidents during the foreign invasions. Nadir Shah, after imprisoning Muhammad Shah, seated himself on the masnad of Delhi, reigned for two months and struck coins in his name. But while returning he re-installed Muhammad Shah on the throne. During his second invasion (1749-50) Ahmad
Shah Abdali claimed the revenues of *Chahar Mahals* (Gujrat, Aurangabad, Pasrur and Sialkot) from the subahdar of the Punjab, Muin-ul-Mulk. Unmoved by the piteous appeals of Muin, emperor Ahmad Shah made over the revenues to the Abdali, though the administrative machinery was under the Mughals. The Abdali became owner of a slice of India’s own territory.

2. *Decadence of the Aristocracy*

An inevitable corollary of the decline in the character of the monarch was the decline of the aristocracy, which came to be reflected in military inefficiency. ‘To the thoughtful student of Mughal history’, writes J. Sarkar, ‘nothing is more striking than the decline of the peerage.’

This ‘startling decline’ is sometimes attributed to loss of lives in wars and stoppage of fresh recruits from outside. In the first place there was a decline in numbers which, again, was caused by domestic discord and military campaigns. Seven civil wars for the throne during 1707-20 as well as numerous armed conflicts between contesting nobles for power and authority took a heavy toll of lives of Mughal princes, nobles, officers and soldiers. Similarly the campaigns against the various rebellious nationalities,—the Sikhs, Jats, Bundelas, Rathors and Marathas,—caused a heavy slaughter. During the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali many prominent nobles and excellent soldiers also lost their lives. Secondly, the resultant loss in the martial character of the aristocracy was not made good, either by birth of new generations maintaining a continuous flow of able and energetic nobles or by infusion of fresh blood due to immigration of hardy, able recruits from outside. Irrevocably gone were the generations of heroic nobles who had served as the pillars of state from Akbar to Aurangzeb. They did not leave worthy sons and grandsons ‘even half as capable as themselves’. The eigh-
teenth century biographical dictionary of the Mughal peerage is an eloquent testimony to this qualitative decline, judged by derisive comments or absence of comments regarding the sons and grandsons of reputed nobles. Again, no new men also rose from the ranks of the commonalty. Thirdly, the roots of Mughal administration and army alike, fed and manned by foreign recruits from Bokhara, Khurasan, Iran and Arabia and converted Hindus, dried up with the stoppage of 'the regular flow of the right type of recruits,' the growing alienation of the gifted and clever Persian Shias and of the martial Hindu nationalities,—the Rajputs, Sikhs, Jats, Bundelas while the Marathas acted as a running sore in their open challenging confrontation.

But it was not merely by numerical, quantitative or demographic analysis that the decline of the nobility is to be judged. More significant was the moral or qualitative degeneration. It was a decline in character, a decadence of spirit. The escheat system compelled each generation of nobles to start career afresh and encouraged extravagance and luxurious living. This, together with an enervating climate, sapped the vitality of the once hardy and martial races while polygamy and the maintenance of large harems led to miscegenation and consequent degeneration. Aurangzeb's long Deccan wars compelled the nobles to spend their whole life in military camps and thereby led to the growth of a 'tent generation', lacking facilities of education.

To a large extent this decadence of the peerage was due to the decline in the character of the monarch, for when the emperors were 'sluggards and fools', they ceased to be the guide and master of the nobility. Personally incapable, lacking discretion to select able and efficient ministers and officers, and swayed by scheming, ambitious and cunning favourites, the rulers failed to govern and create proper conditions in which the aristocracy including ministers and officers, could display their talents in war and administration in complete security of tenure. When in that age
of 'delusion and deceit', careers were not open to talent, nobles had necessarily to shift for themselves.

Nevertheless the aristocracy itself must bear a heavy responsibility in the matter. They had utterly forgotten the old traditions of distinguished and devoted service of their ancestors. Neither any sense of loyalty to the emperor nor any sense of love of country influenced them. Stark selfishness was the keynote of the policies and activities of the principal actors in the drama of the eighteenth century. The instinct of self-preservation was the mainspring of action. It is, of course, a ruling factor in human psychology. But now no price was considered too high for it. All moral values were thrown to the winds. No scruple deterred the nobles. No means was left untried to gain the end. Intrigue, conspiracy, blinding, murder, and wars became normal methods in that abnormal age. What Watts, the experienced English factor of Kasimbazar, observed about contemporary politics of Siraj-ud-Daula's Bengal is equally true of eighteenth century India: 'the only oracle that everyone consulted was self-interest'. The nobles moved unabashed in naked selfishness and rank unscrupulousness.

With the abeyance of monarchy disappeared all fear of governing authority. As both the King and Wazir were incapable of controlling the administration there was no protector to whom the people could appeal. The way for internal spoliation by the peerage was left open. As Sarkar writes: 'each noble took what he could of the public revenue; each zamindar usurped lands in his neighbourhood or levied blackmail, on the roads and villages outside his jurisdiction' (c. 1749). This along with other forms of spoliation by foreign invaders and internal marauders, contributed to financial bankruptcy of the government. Another proof of political decadence was that public offices came to be regarded by the nobles as hereditary, irrespective of ability or training or emperor's selection. Intizam-ud-Daula considered himself to have-
been deprived by Safdar Jang of the Wizarat held by his father.

Another vice of the aristocracy was the habitual use of wine, drugs and addiction to pleasures of the harem, a diversion which they all had in common with their crowned heads. But not much fault can be found here, for the nobles of the period of the Great Mughals also indulged in such pleasure-seeking. The difference lies in the fact that in the former case it was controlled and not generally allowed to interfere with their outdoor life or administration. Now it was the other way. Outdoor or administrative activity was practically sacrificed to satisfy the sensual pleasures.

Thirdly, the Wazirs and many nobles lacked the power of leadership and capacity to bear the burdens of administration and war. As the king was a puppet, the resultant political and administrative vacuity proved to be pernicious.

No noble, minister or general in the eighteenth century could evince that happy combination of administrative and military ability and efficiency as well as loyal and devoted service of an Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, Man Singh, Todar Mal, Sadullah Khan, Ibrahim, Islam Khan Rumi, Mir Jumla and Mirza Rajah Jai Singh and a few others. As we trek through the eighteenth century we notice a progressive decline in the character of the nobility. Even the earlier generations of nobles from Bahadur Shah to Muhammad Shah, who were certainly very much inferior to their predecessors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and suffered from numerous defects, were undoubtedly of a much better stuff than those from Muhammad Shah to Shah Alam. No doubt Munim Khan, Wazir of Bahadur Shah, was an experienced man of business but he was an exotic, out of tune with the local environment. Asad Khan and Ghaziuddin Firuz Jang both certainly earned distinction in war in Aurangzeb's time but now they were too advanced in age to be of any useful
service. Asad’s son, Zulfiqar, also distinguished in war, was hardly a successful administrator. The two Sayyid brothers, distinguished generals, also failed as administrators and were motivated by selfish interests and vindictiveness. Nevertheless all these nobles were much better in comparison with their successors.

The history of the Delhi court during the half century from the fall of the Sayyids to the restoration of Shah Alam was made by such nobles, as Chin Qilich Khan Nizam-ul-Mulk, Qamaruddin, Javid Khan, Udham Bai, Safdar Jang, Nizam’s great grandson, Ghaziuddin Imad-ul-Mulk, and others. Chin Qilich Khan Nizam-ul-Mulk, undoubtedly the greatest military general of the age in India and also successful as an administrator, was looked upon at times as saviour of the empire. But his selfish ambition and diplomatic cunning (coupled with the factious party politics) prevented him from really saving the empire. That astute Persian invader, Nadir Shah, had read into his soul and had warned Muhammad Shah about his mischievous potentialities. Wazir Qamaruddin was a drunkard without any administrative or military capacity. Udham Bai, mother of Ahmad Shah was greedy of power and wealth, ruling her son and his kingdom with her paramour, eunuch Javid Khan. Safdar Jang, a scheming, ambitious and selfish noble, lacked all military and administrative capacity. Nizam’s great-grandson, Ghaziuddin Imad-ul-Mulk, had a keen intellect but hardly any administrative capacity. To the prevailing vices of licentiousness and sloth he added deceit, cowardice and cruelty and became a terrible monster. He had emperor Alamgir II and even his own uncle, ex-Wazir Intizam-ud-Daula, murdered. Ghulam Qadir Rohilla blinded emperor Shah Alam but was decapitated by Mahadaji Sindhia and the blind emperor avenged himself by touching the severed head. ‘Even an angel’, writes Jadunath Sarkar, ‘would have to beat his wings ineffectually in such a foul atmosphere, heavy with the inertia of an age-old decadent society and state.’
This degeneration of the aristocracy could not be
checked as there was no strong ruler to guide and control
the members thereof. The selfish interests of one ambitious
noble clashed with those of others. This largely
accounted for the political turmoils, wars, conspiracies,
murders and barbarous atrocities of the age. There was
a scramble for office and land; administration came to
be paralysed; revenue collection fell; the peasantry was
rack-rented and oppressed; the government turned bankrupt;
the soldiers mutinied for pay; the country was ruined.
The character of the peerage that now represented Yamin-
ud-Daula and Sadullah, Mir Jumla and Asaf Jah, filled
every true friend of the Delhi monarchy with despair
(Sarkar). Jean Law, the mid-eighteenth century French
adventurer bewailed before historian Ghulam Husain
(April, 1759): "I have travelled everywhere from Bengal
to Delhi, but nowhere have I found anything from any
one except oppression of the poor and plundering of
wayfarers. Whenever I wanted that one of these famous
potentates, like Shuja, Imad and their peers, out of a
regard for honour and a desire for the regulation of the
Government, should undertake to put in order the affairs
of Bengal and suppress the English (usurpers of that
province), not one of them felt any inclination to this
task. They did not once weigh in their minds the
praiseworthiness or shame of their conduct.... The Indian
nobles (umara) are a set of disorderly inconsistent block-
heads, who exist solely for ruining a world of people'
(Siyar, ii. 257). In the same strain Shah Alam lamented
(1768): 'Through the perfidiousness of the nobility and
vassals this anarchy has arisen, and every one proclaims
himself a sovereign in his own place, and they are at
variance with one another, the strong prevailing over the
weak' (Calendar of Persian Correspondence ii. 836, 1101).

By creating internal bankruptcy of the state, and in
indulging in mutual conflicts and rivalry, sometimes by
inviting and sometimes by allying with foreign invaders,
the selfish nobles, lacking in any sense of loyalty to their
crowned head and any sense of love of the country or patrio-
tism supplied opportunities for foreign invasions, as those of
Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali, and prepared the
ground for foreign rule over the land. 'The want of the
union of the natives', writes Malcolm, 'appears one of
the strongest foundations of our power; it has certainly
contributed beyond all others to its establishment.'

Thus the 'highest instruments of the state' became now
the surest agents of disintegration.

3. The Problem of the Wizarat

In the Mughal empire there were two special posts, the
Vakil and the Wazir. As representative of the emperor the
Vakil was higher in status. But the Wazir's controlling
authority and power of patronage was greater. Besides this,
as the post of Wazir opened better prospects of making pri-
ivate gain it was more coveted. Indeed it was the Wazir who
was the central hub of the administrative organization both
in the Middle East and India during the medieval period.
But an over-powerful Wazir would be a potential source of
danger to the emperor. Akbar tried to solve the problem by
distributing the powers of the Wazir among several diwans.
But after that the position of the Wazir as the principal
noble came to be gradually revived, e. g., Asaf Khan
under Jahangir, Sadulla Khan and Mir Jumla under
Shahjahan and Asad Khan under Aurangzeb. But the
emperors remained strong and alert and were able to
maintain their authority over administration. The Wazirs,
too, were held within their limited field.

After 1707 the problem assumed a dangerous shape.
The crux of the political situation now was that the
shadowy king ceased to head the state and govern the
country. Hence the only alternative to disintegration
and anarchy was a really capable, efficient, loyal but strong
Wazir. It was on the character and ability of the Wazir that the nature of the administration as well as the future of the people would depend. Only a Bismarckian type of prime minister could have saved the situation. But that was not to be. The post of Wazir became a source of mutual friction and bickerings among aspiring nobles, e.g., Munim vs. Zulfiqar, Abdullah vs. Nizam, Safdar vs. Intizam, Intizam vs. Imad. No emperor had either the capacity or even the will to restrain them and nip their quarrels and conspiracies. Again, unlike the first two Hanoverians, he worthless emperors did not give the prime minister any facility or opportunity to discharge the onerous responsibility. On the other hand they did not even shrink from conspiring with their courtiers and friends against the Wazirs, as in the time of Farrukhsiyar and Muhammad Shah. While serving such fickle or faithless emperors even an honest and efficient Wazir could realise that it would be suicidal to adopt a beneficial scheme or policy for betterment of the administration. To avoid the fate of the Sayyid brothers, a Wazir must needs throw to the winds all high ideals and abandon sound administrative reforms and statesmanlike policy, conducive to the welfare of the people. They sailed with the wind and allowed the state to drift, viz., Qamaruddin and others. Sunk in licentiousness and leading a slothful life, without caring at all for sound governance or conducting military campaigns and hiding, within his mansion, in times of danger, a Wazir, would feel that he had done his duty well if no disaster befell.

Again, several ambitious and successful aspirants to the Wizarat, excelling in cunning and intrigue, were utterly lacking in administrative capacity or martial spirit e.g., Qamaruddin, Imad-ul-Mulk and others.
Section C

KINGS AND WAZIRS: PROBLEMS AND POLICIES

I. BAHADUR SHAH (1707-12)

WAZIR: MUNIM KHAN (1707-11)

SADULLAH KHAN CHIEF DIWAN (1711-12)

Character of Bahadur Shah

Bahadur Shah was 'the last Mughal emperor about whom anything favourable can be said' (Owen). Ascending the throne at the advanced age of sixtytwo, Bahadur Shah reigned from 1707 to 1712. He was free from some of the worst defects or vices of his successors, whom he did excel in several respects. Unlike all of them he was accustomed to an active camp life. He was not a mere ornament of the throne like his successors, sunk in pleasure and completely swayed by others. He freely exercised his own discretion in public affairs, selecting his own Wazir, a fairly able and experienced man of business, and other ministers and governors. He frequently moved out of Delhi to conduct military campaigns himself, which very few of his successors actually did. In fine he was neither wholly worthless, nor a mere puppet in the hands of others, as all his successors were. Learned and pious, but not fanatical, he had a mild and calm disposition, possessing the power of dissimulation. Khafi Khan has praised his generosity, good nature and sense of forgiveness. He could not say 'no' to anybody. In fact he was extremely soft by nature. His character was a complete contrast to that of his father but it somewhat resembled Dara's.
Brighter and abler than his successors, Bahadur Shah was admittedly inferior in comparison with his predecessors. His age and nature both contributed to the ineffectiveness of the monarchy. To a person familiar with the glories of the Great Mughals from Akbar to Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah was certainly not great, lacking in the liberalism and administrative genius of Akbar, the frankness and love of nature of Jahangir, the magnificence of Shahjahan and the industry and energy of Aurangzeb. No doubt he achieved some success in isolated operations but on an over-all view, his policy and activities were not at all adequate to solve matters satisfactorily. Rightly has Irvine observed: 'Although not a great sovereign, Bahadur Shah may be called, in comparison with his successors, a fairly successful one'.

Problems and Policies

(i) The Problem of Appointments: As regards statesmanship Bahadur Shah followed a policy of conciliation, of cautious compromise, of trial and error throughout his reign. He allowed matters to drift, patching up a temporary peace by seeking to placate everybody without taking decisions to solve the real problem. This, however, was neither wholly wise, conducive to the best interests of the state, nor successful. The first serious test of his statesmanship arose over the problem of the relationship of the 'Alamgiri nobles'. How to reconcile the aspirations of the nobles of Aurangzeb's time with the claims of his own supporters? His position was initially weak. Soft-hearted and advanced in age, he could not adopt a strong or assertive policy in any matter.

Bahadur Shah declared that he would secure the help and co-operation of all old 'Alamgiri nobles', perhaps on the suggestion of his best supporter, Munim Khan. He did not penalise (in conformity with old traditions)
the adherents of Azam, and those who submitted to him were promised posts or jagirs. Among these nobles were leaders of Irani and Turani parties,—Asad Khan, Zulfiqar Khan, Ghaziuddin Khan, Chin Qilich Khan, Md. Amin Khan, and others. Bahadur Shah succeeded in isolating Kam Bakhsh in Bijapur and Golkonda. But a real problem arose with regard to the question of the appointment of the Wazir. Aurangzeb's old and experienced Wazir Asad Khan, appealing to Aurangzeb's will, claimed the post for himself and the post of Mir Bakhshi for his son, Zulfiqar Khan. But Bahadur Shah had already promised the post of Wazir to his trusted minister, Munim Khan. Asad Khan might be experienced but Munim Khan was helpful in getting him the throne. So he tried to please both by a compromise, by dividing authority,—by making Munim Wazir (revenue minister) and governor of Agra as a mansabdar of 7000 and Asad Khan Vakil-i-mutlaq (Prime Minister), a post lying in abeyance since the time of Asaf Khan and Shah Jahan. But this division pleased neither, complicated the administration and did not endure. Though dissatisfied, Asad Khan formally accepted the offer, but as the chief representative of the king he petitioned, claiming all privileges enjoyed by Asaf Khan in the time of Shah Jahan, viz., attendance of all officers, including the Wazir, to pay court to him, submission of all letters regarding appointments, dismissals, and transfer of officers, etc. His vaulting claims vexed Bahadur Shah. But to conciliate him he accepted most of the claims. Munim Khan was given the title of Khan-i-Khanan. But this did not solve the difficulty. The 'Alamgiri nobles' were unhappy over the appointment of an obscure outsider. Munim did not like the regulations which formally made him a subordinate of Asad and did not want to share his power with him and declined to send the necessary papers to the Vakil. Asad and Zulfiqar, too, were dissatisfied. As the friction continued, an excuse was at last found
to keep the aged Vakil out of the way. He was made to retire to Delhi and placed in charge of Lahore, Delhi and Ajmer. Zulfiqar was appointed Mir Bakhshi and also made his father’s deputy.

ii. Position of Parties

The Turani nobles remained in the background during Bahadur Shah’s reign. Muhammad Amin Khan, Firoz Jang and Chin Qilich Khan did not figure prominently. But Bahadur Shah tried to conciliate them. Muhammad Amin Khan was sadr. and then faujdar of Moradabad. Chin Qilich Khan was appointed governor of Awadh and faujdar of Gorakhpur with the title of Khan-i-Dauran. His father, Firoz Jang, was sent away as governor of Gujrat. This conciliatory policy was probably adopted because in the Deccan Kam Bakhsh was still a rival candidate. These three nobles did not exercise much influence on state policy during this reign on account of the ill-will of the emperor and Munim Khan towards them. They had a feeling that they were not treated well and not given their due. They did not approve the policy of conciliation shown towards the Rajputs and the Marathas by Bahadur Shah under the advice of Munim and Zulfiqar in 1710. The position of the Turani group became further weakened on account of the death of Firoz Jang and the resignation of Chin Qilich Khan. Thus party politics revolved round only these two dominant personalities in the court, Munim Khan Wazir and Zulfiqar Khan Mir Bakhshi. Theirs was not merely a personal rivalry but it had political implications as well. Zulfiqar supported a policy of far-reaching concessions to the Rajputs and the Marathas, so that they might support the empire. Munim was also inclined towards a policy of compromise and conciliation not only towards the old ‘Alamgiri nobles’ but also towards the Hindus. But as he did not possess previous seci-4
experience of the empire, he did not want to depart completely from Aurangzeb's old policy. This attitude of the Wazir satisfied none and the problems could not be solved.

iii. Policy towards the Hindus

(a) Rajput Problem: Relation between Mughals and Rajputs (1707-12). How far did Bahadur Shah's Rajput policy illustrate the general attitude of compromise and conciliation? The Rajput problem of Bahadur Shah's reign was a legacy of Aurangzeb. The wounds inflicted by Aurangzeb's Rajput war were not yet healed up. During the civil war of succession both Azam and Bahadur Shah tried to secure the support of the Rajputs. Azam granted the title of Maharaja to Ajit Singh and appointed him governor of Gujrat. Jai Singh II was given the title of 'Mirza Raja' and appointed governor of Malwa. Both were created commanders of 7000. Jai Singh II at first joined Azam but deserted him later. In Amber there was a succession dispute and Bahadur Shah favoured not him but his rival younger brother Vijay Singh, who joined the emperor. Ajit Singh remained neutral and recovered the ancestral capital Jodhpur during the civil war and it was alleged that in his attempt to revive Hinduism he oppressed the Mussalmans and he was supported by the Ranas of Udaipur and of Amber. Bahadur Shah wanted to break up this Rajput coalition and punish Ajit Singh. He appointed a new faujdar of Jodhpur (Mihrab Khan). After sometime he himself left for Rajputana. Reaching Amber in 1768 he confiscated the Amber state because of the internal dispute between the two brothers. Amber was renamed Islamabad; Jai Sing's goods were confiscated; the succession was changed in favour of Vijay Singh. But the emperor had no intention of establishing direct rule here. Vijay
Singh, now made King, did not get Amber, which was declared an imperial territory (*Khalsa*) and it was guarded by an imperial *faujdar* even after it was handed over to Vijay Singh.

Bahadur Shah’s Amber policy resembled Aurangzeb’s Jodhpur policy. It was prompted by a desire to gain greater control over the trade routes passing through Rajputana. Bahadur Shah was unsuccessful and it aggravated the differences between the emperor and the Rajputs. Rana Amar Singh of Udaipur escaped invasion by submitting to the emperor and sent his own brother to him. Ajit Singh now offered peace but this was turned down. The imperial *faujdar* defeated the Rathor army and Durgadas and Ajit Singh were called to the court. Ajit Singh professed submission but was doubtful about the intention of the emperor. In February 1708 he surrendered like a penitent rebel and was restored to his former *mansab* and granted the title of Maharaja. But distrusting the Rajputs and in order to vindicate imperial prestige, the emperor decided to occupy Jodhpur, levy *jizyah* and re-establish Islam in Jodhpur. Ajit Singh repeatedly petitioned for restoration of Jodhpur but in vain. *Jizyah* was levied. Both Ajit and Jai Singh were kept in semi-confinement when the emperor marched to the south against Kam Bakhsh. However, the two rajas along with Durgadas escaped in April 1708. Thus Bahadur Shah’s Rajput policy, inspired by Munim Khan, failed in practice. A contemporary historian, Mirza Muhammad, characterised this policy as ill-advised and held that the two Ranas should have been given ‘assurances and concessions’. But the emperor, advised by Munim Khan, only gave ‘empty promises’ of *jagirs*. Bahadur Shah’s policy of ‘limited concession’ failed.

The second Rajput outbreak now began. The two Ranas of Amber and Jodhpur made an agreement with the Maharana of Udaipur for common resistance to the
Mughals. Their object was not only to recover their territories but to drive out the Mughals and establish Rajput rule in North India. Ajit occupied Jodhpur and Jai Singh Amber. Mughal outposts in some places were overrun. Bahadur Shah asked Asad Khan Vakil, to advance against the Rajputs and repress the disturbances with other nobles including Chin Qilich Khan, Md. Amin Khan, Khan-i-Dauran, governor of Awadh and Khan-i-Jahan, governor of Allahabad and others. But the imperial order was not carried out because these nobles never moved. We can discern here the decline in the prestige of monarchy. The Irani party leaders, Asad and Zulfiqar, who did not see eye to eye with Munim Khan’s Rajput policy, opened negotiations with Jai Singh and Ajit Singh. The second Rajput outbreak could not be wholly crushed. The Rajputs also did not fully succeed in their resistance. All the same, imperial prestige suffered. Bahadur Shah then in the Deccan had to patch up a hasty peace with the Rajputs by restoring the two Ranas of Jodhpur and Amber to Mughal service at the suggestion of Asad Khan and Azim-us-Shan. But he did not finally decide the question of returning their capitals (Watan jagir). They wanted the posts of the subahdars of Malwa and Gujrat respectively.

After defeating Kam Bakhsh in the Deccan, Bahadur Shah turned his attention to Rajputana again. He visited Rajputana in 1709 for the second time to punish the Ranas. A powerful section of the court favoured a strong policy towards the Rajputs. Firoz Jang was directed to proceed to Ajmer from Gujrat. The Raiputs were alarmed at the strong repressive policy and sought mediation of some of their friends like Asad Khan and Azim-us-Shan. This as well as the news of a Sikh rising in the Punjab under Banda (Dec. 1709) favoured a more pacific policy on the part of the emperor. The uprising of the Sikhs so near the capital and the north-west frontier was held to be more dangerous than the Rajput
problem. So a hurried settlement was made with the Rajputs, traditional allies of the Mughals: (1) the Rajput Ranas were to get back their homelands; (2) they might pay court to the emperor during march; (3) they would be given six months' leave, after which they would serve wherever they were appointed. But these terms were found to be somewhat contradictory. These constituted only the first step to reconcile the Rajputs. Bahadur Shah wanted that the Rajputs should offer military assistance to the Mughals against the Sikhs and the Marathas. But this presupposed a cordiality and sympathetic attitude towards the Rajputs which was lacking. A suspicious attitude did not fit in with the Ranas’ expectations. They not only wanted restoration of homelands and governorships of Malwa and Gujrat, but they wanted the Mughals to give up the attitude of distrust and rely on them so that they also could depend on the emperor. The Mughal prince, Azim-us-Shan, promised to help them. But the Ranas were reluctant to come to the court. They did so only in October 1711 when Munim Khan was dead. Some alternative arrangements were made now at the intercession of Azim. Jai Singh was made faujdar of Ahmedabad and Ajit Singh of Sorath in Gujrat. But these appointments were far below their expectations. In relation to the Rajputs, Bahadur Shah’s attitude changed with circumstances. It was not a policy of conciliation, which was resorted to in expediency and the Rajput problem remained unsolved during the remaining years of his reign.

(b) Sikh Problem: Aurangzeb had crushed the rebellion of Guru Govind. But the deep-seated causes thereof persisted. At first there was some indication of Bahadur Shah’s co-operation with Guru Govind Singh. The Guru was with Bahadur Shah in the war of succession, not because he got a mansab (as Irvine says), but probably for seeking Mughal help against the local chief of Kahlur who wanted to drive him from Anandpur (Grewal).
He accompanied the emperor to Rajputana and the Deccan where he died (Nov. 1708). His property was not escheated. The Guruship ended with Govind. But a leader arose among the Sikhs named Banda. He was not strictly speaking a Guru but a military leader. Banda’s movement of resistance against the Mughals, became rather serious particularly in Lahore and Sirhind. For Bahadur Shah there was now no question of compromise with the Sikhs. He wanted to crush the movement. The Sikh waves would have engulfed the whole of Hindustan if Bahadur Shah had not assumed a counter-offensive (Malcolm). He got the news of the Sikh uprising and the death of Wazir Khan during his Rajput war near the Narmada (Dec., 1710). The Sikh popular rising so near the capital and the strategic north-western frontier was too menacing to be neglected and hence given priority over the Rajput war. A difference, however, arose between the emperor and his Wazir, Munim Khan. The former wanted to lead a jihad (holy war) against the Sikhs. The latter preferred a more calculated advance and guaranteed the capture of Banda. At first different expeditions were sent against the Sikhs (who were pushed back to Sirhind) under Asad Khan, Chin Qilich Khan, Muhammad Amin Khan, Sayyid Abdullah Khan Barha and others. Then the emperor himself started from Thaneshwar (25 Nov. 1710) and reached Sadhaura (36 miles n. e. of it), near the Himalayan foothills where the Sikhs had built several forts for refuge. Mukhligarh was captured (December 1710). The imperialists had to suffer great hardships due to the terrain, the season (winter rain and cold), and deficient supplies. Their morale was shaken by reports of Banda’s miraculous powers, while the Sikhs were inspired by hopes of recreation of a higher rank of life after death roused by him.

However, the road between Delhi and Lahore, so long closed, was opened. The Mughals stormed the Sikh entrenchments and assailed Banda’s headquarters, fort
Lohgarh (Dec. 1710). But Banda escaped with his followers to the hills north of Lahore where he established himself near Jammu. The chagrined emperor blamed his Wazir for the failure to capture Banda and punished the hill Rajas (including the Raja of Nahan sheltering Banda). Laden with Banda’s treasure dug out of the ground, valued at about 20 lakhs (in rupees and gold ashrafis) Bahadur Shah returned to Lahore (Dec. 1710).

The Sikhs now adopted guerrilla tactics and fighting became desultory (1711-12) with imperial troops not advancing beyond the foothills and Banda occasionally descending into the plains for plunder. In January 1711, Muhammad Amin Khan reoccupied Sirhind and fought with the Sikhs in the direction of Lahore and in Bari and Jalandhar doabs. But he, along with another commander Rustam Dil, failed to capture Banda who, enjoying local support in the plains, resorted to guerrilla tactics and never faced them in a pitched battle. Coming down from the hills he raised fresh disturbances. The Mughal commanders fled in panic during his invasion of Bath Jalandhar; the local Sikhs and their supporters killed the Mughal stragglers and stationed their own armed posts at Batala and Kalanaur and the surrounding villages. The Sikhs and their supporters, however, had to suffer much after the Mughals restored their sway.

For sometime in the Mughal camp there was a spy scare. Many were suspected of secret Sikh leanings and sending information to Banda. So all Hindus were ordered to shave their beards, while suspected spies, faqirs, jogis and sannyasis, were expelled from the camp (1711).

Notwithstanding these precautions, concentrations of large armies and best generals in the Punjab for a year and a half, and even the imperial presence, Bahadur Shah failed to achieve much success against Banda. The Sikhs built a big fort at Gurudaspur (between the Beas and the Ravi) near Kalanaur. True, this failure was largely due
to the weakness of the Mughals caused by mutual jealousies and quarrels of the Mughal commanders leading to Rustam Dil's disgrace and imprisonment (September 1711), the uncertainty and disorder due to wars of succession. But the deeper causes of the failure of the Mughals were the guerrilla tactics of Banda. As in the case of the Marathas and the Rajputs, the Sikh army, supported by the local people, skilfully using the terrain and commanded by guerrilla leaders could hold out for long against the much bigger Mughal army. Another factor was the nature of the Sikh rising itself. It was not only a religious movement but had also an economic aspect, being joined largely by the so-called lower classes against the upper one, both Hindu and Muslim. The Sikh movement was now a struggle for an independent Sikh state, just as the Marathas wanted to establish their power in the Deccan. Bahadur Shah's Sikh policy failed. When he died in 1712, Banda took advantage of the struggle for the throne and recovered the lost areas and fortified Lohgarh. Practically the Sikhs recovered their power to a large extent. Fort Sadhaura was abandoned by the Mughals. Whatever Bahadur Shah had done was undone.

(c) The Deccan Problem: The Deccan was a very rich area and the annexation of the independent states (1686-87) there was not attended with the establishment of a firm and sound government. For the time being, again, there was an additional complication arising from the struggle with Kam Bakhsh for the throne. After the defeat and death of the latter Bahadur Shah made some administrative arrangements in the Deccan. At first Azim-us-Shan was appointed viceroy of the six provinces here. But as he preferred Eastern India from Allahabad to Bengal, Zulfiqar Khan was appointed viceroy of the Deccan with sole authority in the revenue and administration besides his existing post of Mir Bakhshi. He was to be assisted by Daud Khan Panni as his deputy governor in Bijapur, Perar and Aurangabad.
Zulfiqar became the most powerful noble in the empire. Such a combination of two posts of Governor and Mir Bakhshi was not permitted in the past. This was opposed by the Wazir Munim Khan who wanted to exclude Khandesh and half of Berar from the Deccan. But this only added to the bitterness between the two. Bahadur Shah did not try to settle this problem. Delegation of large powers to the viceroy or his deputy, was administratively necessary in those days but the central government was weak and it encouraged ambitions in the minds of the powerful nobles. This struggle for enjoying more than one post was an important feature in the party politics in the Mughal court at that time. In the Deccan there were various problems and it was necessary that the viceroy of the Deccan should be a very able officer. It was an important post, which was an object of strife.

Maratha Question: Among these problems of the Deccan the Maratha question was important and the new viceroy found it difficult to deal with this problem of Maratha-Mughal conflict smoothly. Zulfiqar was in favour of the Marathas and at his instance Shahu was released after Aurangzeb’s death. His Vakil was introduced by the viceroy to the emperor praying for the grant of chauth and sardeshmukhi of the six provinces of the Deccan on condition of restoring prosperity to the devastated country. On the other hand, Munim Khan presented the Vakil of Tarabai in the name of her son Shivaji only for sardeshmukhi.

Now, as usual, Bahadur Shah was unwilling to displease either minister. After considerable negotiations he ordered grant of sardeshmukhi to both in pursuance of his policy of compromise, as requested by the ministers. In other words, Bahadur Shah did not recognise Shahu as the lawful Maratha king (though Aurangzeb had recognised him as such) and his claim for chauth was rejected. Even for sardeshmukhi, the two claimants were left to fight out among themselves, endangering peace and order in
the Deccan. Mughal territories there were plundered by both sides in this conflict. It would thus appear that 'Bahadur Shah's Maratha policy was short-sighted and ill-advised' (Satish Chandra). By rejecting the advice of the viceroy, the man on the spot, Bahadur Shah lost a good opportunity for solving the Maratha problem. Bahadur Shah could have earned Shahu's gratitude by recognising him when his position at home was insecure. Zulfiquar Khan held that half-hearted concessions towards the Marathas were of no avail. He wanted to change the Mughal attitude towards the Marathas and stressed the necessity of making them partners in the empire. When his advice was not accepted, the chance of Maratha settlement became difficult. On Bahadur Shah's departure from the Deccan, the Marathas plundered Mughal subahs of Burhanpur, Bijapur and Aurangabad (1710). The local governor could not check their advance towards Ahmadnagar which continued even after Bahadur's death. Zulfiquar's deputy, Daud Khan Panni, and his officers tried to control the Marathas by sowing dissensions among the Marathas, many of whom joined the Mughals. On his own initiative he tried to come to an understanding with the Marathas. He made a private pact with Shahu by which (1) Shahu was promised the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan, though these were to be collected not by the Marathas but by the Mughals, i.e. by Daud Khan, (2) such demands were not to be made from the princes and nobles. There is some difference of opinion regarding the date of this pact (either in 1709 or 1711), but probably it was made in 1711 after the death (in February) of Munim Khan and it could not have been made without the active support of Zulfiquar Khan.

*Importance of this Pact:* This pact of 1711 was very significant. Firstly, it restored the fallen prestige of Shahu. But it did not establish peace in the Deccan on account of endless quarrels sometimes leading to bloodshed.
The Marathas spread everywhere and they began to levy chauth and committed acts of plunder. Secondly, the disturbed conditions encouraged the local zemindars to rise up everywhere and defied the Mughals whose authority came to be confined to the Karnatak only. The internal problem of law and order became aggravated. Thirdly, the most important effect was that it marked a fundamental change from Aurangzeb’s policy. The recognition of the Maratha claim for chauth and sardeshmukhi in effect and substance, though not in law and form, did not result in friendship with the Marathas and establishment of peace. Shahu did not possess real control over all the Maratha chiefs who indulged in private plunders. Such plunders could be avoided only if the Mughals and the Maratha king co-operated. The Mughals did not confirm it in writing. So this co-operation was not forthcoming because the Mughals doubted Maratha sincerity and they did not put their confidence on the Marathas as is illustrated by their refusal to give a written agreement. The Mughal officers also intrigued in the Deccan with the domestic enemies of Shahu. Hence, this pact did not succeed in achieving the desired result. Bahadur Shah’s relations with the Rajputs, the Sikhs and the Marathas show that his policy towards the Hindus proved to be a failure.

iv. Administrative Problems

(a) Problem of the Wizarat

Bahadur Shah’s handling of the problem of Wizarat illustrated his characteristic attitude or policy of compromise but the extent of his success is a matter of doubt. As noticed before, the appointment of Munim Khan as Wazir did not solve the problem. It assumed a new phase when Munim Khan died in 1711. Azim-us-Shan recommended Zulfiquar Khan for the post of Wazir and
the late Wazir's two sons for the posts of Mir Bakhshir and the Deccan viceroy. But the emperor considered the latter to be unfit and hence unsuitable. Zulfiqar Khan, who was already holding these posts, did not want to give these posts up, and claimed the post of Wazir in addition to his two existing posts. The combination of three posts by one person would have made him too powerful and dangerous for the monarchy. Ultimately no Wazir was appointed and temporarily Sadullah Khan was made chief Diwan. Satish Chandra has tried to justify the claim of Zulfiqar, saying that concentration of power in one person was desirable in the situation of the Mughal empire. The Wazir should not only be the financial minister but he should also be at the helm of all political affairs, and aware of all things, the army, policy, dealing with the Hindus, Rajputs, Marathas, Sikhs, old nobles. The Wazir was to be the saviour, the hub of the empire in the absence of a strong king. This conception of the Wizarat differed from the traditional one. Thus the administrative problem was not well solved.

(b) General Policy

In religious policy Bahadur Shah made a cautious and hesitating departure from Aurangzeb's policy. Without sharing his father's puritanical outlook, he continued the ban on drinking, singing and dancing in the court. Again, though not as heterodox as Dara, he somewhat resembled him. He had some leanings towards Sufism and Shiaism. The orthodox circles were, therefore, displeased with him for calling himself a Sayyid. He had to give up his attempt to use the term 'Wasi' (or executor, se. of the will of Prophet Muhammad) after the name of Ali in the Khutbah (Friday prayer) as it was a reflection on the first three caliphs as usurpers, and led to a Shia-Sunni riot. Both his mother and wife were Hindus. But it is not known, whether this had any influence on
his policy and outlook. As regards his policy towards the Hindus there is no reference to destruction of temples or forced conversions. But the Hindus continued to suffer from the prohibition of the use of palkis, Arabi or Iraqi horses or chariots and elephants. They were not permitted to wear pearls in their ears and to trim their beard. Employment of Hindus as news-reporters in the provinces was prohibited. Jiziya, though not formally abolished, fell into disuse gradually. The orthodox approach was gradually modified and slackened. There was an attempt at compromise particularly with regard to the Marathas and to a less extent with the Rajputs. The circumstances were largely responsible for the fluid attitude of Bahadur Shah towards the Rajputs and the Marathas. The old repressive policy towards the Sikhs, however, continued. As noted before this policy did not solve the problems. In the field of administration, Bahadur’s reign exhibited signs of decline which will be discussed in the fifth chapter.

II. JAHANDAR SHAH (1712-13)
WAZIR: ZULFIQAR KHAN

After Bahadur Shah the process of the abasement of monarchy and of the dissolution of the empire became accelerated. The sovereigns became incapacitated and politically insignificant. With the accession of Jahandar Shah, Zulfiqar Khan became his Wazir, as a matter of right, besides retaining the viceroyalty of the Deccan, ruling it through his deputy, Daud Khan Panni. With the unprecedented mansab of 10,000 he practically enjoyed the position of a prince. His father, Asad Khan, continued as Vakil and was appointed governor of Gujrat in absentia with the rank of 12,000. But the aged Vakil did not regularly go to the court and so all power gravitated
to Zulfiqar, who guided and advised the emperor in war and peace alike. The appointment of Zulfiqar was naturally followed by elevation of his subordinates: his Diwan, Sabhachand, now entitled Raja, became Diwan of crownlands (Diwan-i-Khalsa-i-Sharifa), and Turani Abdus Samad Khan sadr.

But the ambitious Zulfiqar was not fully satisfied and wanted greater power. The spirit of party politics now began to work. In particular, an opposition group of some royal favourites grew up, poisoned the ears of the emperor against the Wazir and began to interfere in the administration. (1) The first was the Kokaltashi group, led by Ali Murad Khan Jahan Kokaltash Khan, foster-brother of the emperor, the closest royal favourite, friend and guide of Jahandar, and entitled Amir-ul-Umara. As he had already been promised the post of Wazir, he and his family members were now displeased and indulged in intrigues against the Wazir, whose sternness the weak Jahandar did not like. So he naturally lent an easy ear to the whisperings of Zulfiqar’s enemies. Considering Kokaltash to be more amenable to himself, he appointed him Mir Bakhshi, his brother governor of Agra and brother-in-law the second Bakhshi. Some other nobles, including Sadullah Khan, Khan-i-Saman, too, joined Kokaltash. Encouraged by the secret support of the emperor, this group openly tried to interfere in the administration and set the Wazir’s authority at naught. Several important appointments were made on the advice of Kokaltash without consulting Zulfiqar (e.g. Sarbuland Khan, deputy governor of Gujrat) or against his wishes (e.g. Khwaja Hasan, emperor’s brother-in-law, entitled Khan-i-Dauran, appointed guardian of the royal prince Azzuddin in a campaign against Farrukhshiyar, though Khwaja Hasan had never killed a cat and was ‘one of the lowest men of the time’, according to Khafi Khan). (2) The second group was that of Jahandar’s favourite-queen, Lal Kunwar, a former dancing girl, reputed to
be a descendant of Tansen, and her relations and associates. She enjoyed considerable influence over the infatuated emperor. She was hostile to the Wazir as he did not support the demands of her friends, relatives and associates for officers. In his fondness for the queen Jahandar neglected even the ordinary decencies and lowered the imperial dignity. Through her influence many got imperial favour and patronage. A friend of hers, Zohrah, a vegetable-seller, gave the emperor a loan of one lakh of rupees. Further, many of her relations and friends got mansabs, jagirs and posts and they assumed a high-handed attitude. The elevation of such persons of low standard displeased the nobles and officials, who disliked the emperor's relations with a dancing-girl. But her influence was non-political and must not be exaggerated. Even her relations were not appointed to important offices at the court or given important administrative posts. Her case cannot be compared with that of Nur Jahan. The chief reason of Zulfiqar's hostility was that his influence was affected by the hold of the queen. Jahandar Shah did not dare dismiss him or oppose him openly, but secretly intrigued to get rid of him. Thus the entire court atmosphere and administration became vitiated.

Policy: It was in this background of general administrative confusion and in order to strengthen his position that Zulfiqar now framed his general policy of conciliating the Hindus and tightening the administration. First, he tried to secure the co-operation of the Rajputs and the Marathas. As regards the Rajputs it was at his instance that Azam Shah had already released Jai Singh and Ajit Singh even before Bahadur Shah came to power. But this did not find much favour under Bahadur. Now as Wazir Zulfiqar continued his older pro-Hindu policy. To create confidence among the Hindus, Jiziyā was abolished in April 1712 and Jai Singh had been given the title of Mirza Raja Sawai and Ajit Singh Maharaja. Both were raised to the rank of 7000. Jai Singh was
appointed governor of Malwa and Ajit Singh of Gujrat. This satisfied the Rajputs.

As regards the Marathas in the Deccan Shahu had been released during the reign of Azam at the suggestion of Zulfiqar. When Zulfiqar became Wazir the earlier pro-Maratha policy was continued and Daud Khan’s pact with the Marathas was not changed. However, there was a new development. Rajaram’s son (of Kolhapur branch), Shivaji was given a mansab, the title of Anup Singh and the Deshmukhi of Hyderabad (1712). This practically recognised the Kolhapur branch though it was inferior in status to the Satara branch because of lower mansab. Shahu had already proposed to Tarabai to divide the Maratha territory (1708). But Tarabai declined. So the civil war between the two families greatly disturbed the Deccan and both sides plundered Mughal dominions. The division of the Maratha ‘swarajya’ and of chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan between the two families was a logical corollary to their recognition as separate feudatories of the empire. The new arrangement, therefore, proved to be an advantage for the Mughals because this internal division served to check Maratha ambitions.

With regard to the Sikhs, Zulfiqar’s policy was not very clear. On Bahadur Shah’s death Md. Amin Khan, leaving his post, had returned to participate in the civil war. Banda was encouraged to emerge from his retreat, descend into plains, re-occupy Sadhaura, restore Lohgarh fort and plunder Sirhind province again. Subsequently he was recalled to oppose Farrukhsiyar. By sending Md. Amin Khan again to crush the Sikhs under Banda at Sadhaura and Mukhlishgarh (1712), he continued the coercive policy of Bahadur Shah and Munim Khan. At the same time in order to crush his movement internally he recognised Ajit Singh (the adopted son and spiritual successor of Guru Govind), who was given a mansab. He came to the Mughal court with his mother.
As against the Jats and the Bundelas the position continued as in the time of Bahadur Shah. Chhatrasal Bundela remained a loyal feudatory of the Mughals and was asked to join Prince Azzuddin against Farrukhshyiar. The Jat leader, Churaman, who had sided with Azim-us-Shan in the civil war was pardoned and restored to his own position.

Zulfiqar's conciliatory policy towards the Hindus and efforts to concentrate power in his own hands caused a strong reaction among the old Alamgiri and Bahadur Shahi nobles. The Turani 'Chin' group (including Firuz Jang, Chin Qilich Khan and Muhammad Amin Khan), rival of Zulfiqar's Irani group, was dissatisfied but dispersed. The Turani group had played a secondary role in the time of Bahadur Shah. After his death Chin Qilich Khan had started for Lahore with an army to help Azim-us-Shan but on the latter's death he returned to Delhi. Zulfiqar tried to crush Chin Qilich Khan but he was dissuaded by his own father. Chin Qilich was now appointed governor of Malwa as 5-hazari mansabdar. Dissatisfied with this post he resigned. Md. Amin Khan, faujdar of Moradabad, who had been deputed against the Sikhs, was then busy pursuing Banda. So the Turani leaders were not present in the capital. When the rebellion of Azim-us-Shan's son, Farrukhshyiar, became a serious danger, Zulfiqar thought it high time to conciliate Chin Qilich Khan. He was given a mansab of 7000 and sent against Farrukhshyiar. But Chin Qilich was still dissatisfied and did not want to take part in the fight against Farrukhshyiar. Zulfiqar thus failed to win over the old nobles. The attitude of the Turanis was an important factor in the subsequent defeat of Jahandar and Zulfiqar.
Reasons of failure of Zulfiqar

Zulfiqar might have tided over the difficulty caused by the dissatisfaction of the Turani leaders if he had been able to win over other sections of the nobility. But he failed there too. This failure was due to certain factors. To a large extent he was himself responsible for it, though there is room for differences of opinion. (1) One such factor was his character. He was able, no doubt, but he was haughty, proud and faithless, according to the contemporary historian Iradat Khan. Iradat Khan was, however, not an impartial observer, being always opposed to him. He was attached first to Munim Khan and then to Azim-us-Shan. Iradat was dissatisfied and disappointed because he was not given any post by Zulfiqar. (2) The second factor was Zulfiqar’s oppressive conduct. The charge of oppression has been brought against Zulfiqar by Iradat and other historians like Kamwar and Warid because there were many executions, imprisonments and confiscations of property after the accession of Jahandar Shah. This charge is somewhat true. The adherents of his defeated brothers were refused chances of employment. This was indeed a departure from earlier practice but this vindictiveness was not due to the personal feelings of Zulfiqar Khan. Perhaps there were still many uncertain factors which had to be considered: the rebellion of Farrukhshiyar was not yet suppressed; perhaps Kokaltash was responsible for many executions. But the real reason was that Zulfiqar could not dare take as liberal a view, as kings would, of the loyalty of the nobles and the followers of the other party. (3) The third complaint brought by Iradat was Zulfiqar’s stinginess and reluctance in granting mansabs and jagirs, though he himself used to appropriate large sums for himself. This is an old charge, but in defence of Zulfiqar it may be said that on account of the bankruptcy of the
government economy was urgently necessary. Already Bahadur Shah's lavish grants of *jagirs* out of the crownlands had made the financial situation very critical. Munim Khan at first was not in favour of making lavish grants but later on he did not want to court unpopularity by protesting against Bahadur Shah's grants. Zulfiqar had the courage to do what Munim Khan was afraid of. Zulfiqar issued orders that (i) no grants were to be given to a *mansabdar*, and (ii) no increments in ranks were to be given without prior verification of claims in either case, (iii) *mansabdars* were to be compelled to keep their scheduled quota of troops and, (iv) the regulations regarding musters of horses and men were to be enforced. But the nobles did not like this economy and strictness. The anti-Zulfiqar group of Kokaltash and the royal favourites by-passed these orders by appointing a nominee of their own as *arz-i-mukarrar*. The constant disputes between Kokaltash and Zulfiqar could not be resolved as the emperor dared not openly go against his Wazir. But the strict rules of the Wazir were nullified in practice. Royal favourites continued to get grants. Hence in effect 'partisans as well as opponents' alike were dissatisfied. Zulfiqar became unpopular. But the economy of the state could not be revived. (4) The fourth charge against Zulfiqar was that he deliberately tried to destroy the old nobility. This is not quite correct. Even Chin Qilich and Muhammad Amin Khan who formed a powerful group, were reconciled. Many other old Alamgiri and Bahadur Shahi nobles continued to hold important posts in the centre and in the provinces. Zulfiqar, however, resisted the elevation of low-born untried men and defended the old nobles against the claims of Lal Kunwar group. Perhaps this charge reflected the general feeling of the nobles whose methods of corruption were sought to be prevented and checked by Zulfiqar.

The ministry of Zulfiqar ended with the fall of Jahandar Shah. His brief reign was significant in two ways. First,
it showed that the only alternative to a strong king was a strong Wazir. But there were difficulties before Zulfiqar. Neither the king nor the Wazir was powerful. Second, Aurangzeb's policies which had largely been maintained by Bahadur Shah, were rapidly given up, namely, abolition of Jizyah, concessions to Rajputs and attempts were made to secure the co-operation of the Marathas. But all these liberal moves of Zulfiqar ultimately failed with the fall of Zulfiqar.

III. FARRUKHSIYAR (1713-1719)
WAZIR: ABDULLAH KHAN SAYYID

Character of Farrukhsiyar

Farrukhsiyar was a despicable ruler. Certain aspects of his character were wholly unbecoming of a king. He was thoughtless, having, in the words of Khafi Khan, 'no resolution or discretion of his own'. Ghulam Husain describes him as a dull non-entity. He was 'constitutionally incapable of governing by his own will and controlling others'. He was un-energetic and weak, swayed by his latest counsellors. He was fickle, never pursuing any course steadfastly, and unfaithful to his own promises. Vindicitive and suspicious by nature, he would not trust any able agent or his ministers. Though indebted to the Sayyids, he suspected them and entered into conspiracies to overthrow them. But no plot succeeded owing to his cowardice and fickleness. Such a person could hardly accomplish anything good or bad. 'He was strong neither for evil nor for good'. Irvine has correctly assessed his worth: 'Feeble, fickle and false, Farrukhsiyar was himself responsible for the fate which finally overtook him'. Hence it was impossible either to admire or regret him.
There was only one central problem in politics: who was to be supreme in the state, the king or the ministers? All other issues were just secondary, hinging on it or revolving round it. Naturally, it became a matter of confrontation between them throughout from beginning to end. With an emperor like Farrukhisiyar and ministers like the Sayyid brothers it is not surprising at all that the 'agitated and perplexing reign' of Farrukhisiyar 'ended in an imperial tragedy'.

1. Court Politics and Parties: Problem of Appointments

The victory of Farrukhisiyar over Jahandar Shah in 1713 meant the dominance of the Sayyid Brothers. They now played a conspicuous part in the political development of the period for the next seven years. Their tenure was memorable, firstly for a struggle for power between the emperor and the ministers and secondly, for a conflict over policies. As regards the first they attempted to exercise unlimited, absolute power and then depose Farrukhisiyar. In the matter of policy there was a conflict between the Sayyid brothers and the other nobles and ruling classes.

After the formal coronation of Farrukhisiyar (11 January 1713) important appointments were made. As king-makers, responsible for the elevation of Farrukhisiyar, the Sayyid brothers got the highest posts, both as commanders of 7000. Abdullah Khan was appointed Wazir and governor of Multan with the titles of Qutb-ul-Mulk Zafar Jang Sipahsalar. Husain Ali was appointed Mir Bakhshi and governor of Bihar entitled Amir-ul-Umara Firuz Jang. Both ruled their provinces through deputies. Their maternal uncle, Sayyid Muzaffar Khan, was appointed governor of Ajmer. And a few relations and kinsmen were made mansabdars. But apart from these no special position was claimed by the Sayyids for themselves or for their relations. Instead of seeking to establish a mono-
poly of power, they tried to win over the old nobles, most of whom were retained in service. However, Farrukhsiyar, acting on the advice of his friend Mir Jumla (a Turani noble) against the advice of Sayyid brothers, sought to liquidate the Iranis, imprisoning and then executing Zulfiqar and disgracing his father, Asad Khan, on the allegation that they were responsible for the death of Azim-us-Shan. This was unwise for the empire, because these two Irani nobles could have served a check on the Sayyids. Abdullah realised the importance of the remaining powerful group, the Turanis, and sought to win them over. (1) Chin Qilich Khan, now entitled 'Nizam-ul-Mulk,' and appointed viceroy of the Deccan, with its six provinces being under his deputies, was the ablest man in the empire. Abdullah used to regard the Nizam as his elder brother. (2) Muhammad Amin Khan (Itimad-ud-Daula Nusrat Jang) was appointed second Bakhshi. (3) Another Turani noble, Abdus Samad Khan, was appointed governor of Lahore. In other provinces old nobles were reinstated. A number of secondary posts giving access to the emperor went to the king's influential personal favourites like Mir Jumla and Khwaja Asim, forming a party of 'king's friends' as it were. They exercised very much real power over the administration, interfered in the work of the ministers, sometimes by-passing them in government. This in turn accentuated the differences between the king and the Sayyid brothers.

2. Policy towards Hindus: the Rajputs, the Marathas & the Sikhs

The abolition of jizyah promulgated in Bihar by Farrukhsiyar on the advice of Husain Ali in 1713 was confirmed. The pilgrimage tax was also abolished at certain places. But the Hindus were still forbidden to use palkis, Arabi and Iraqi horses.
The Rajput Rajas, Jai Singh II, Ajit Singh, the Maharana of Udaipur and others sent their felicitations and paid obeisance to Farrukhsiyar. But the first two, though summoned, did not dare come to the court on apprehension of treachery. They petitioned for appointment as governors of Malwa and Gujarat or Malwa and Burhanpur. Like Bahadur Shah Farrukhsiyar also did not agree to the close proximity or the union of the two rajas as being dangerous for the empire. Subsequently Jai Singh was appointed governor of Malwa, though his alliance with Ajit Singh was disapproved. But Ajit Singh refused to go as governor of Thatta (Oct. 1713). Defying imperial authority he also invaded Mughal dominion. Farrukhsiyar took to stratagem. At first he himself wanted to go to Marwar. But finally it was decided in a meeting (20 Oct. 1713) that Husain Ali should lead the campaign to Marwar to punish Ajit Singh (Dec-Jan. 1714) for his anti-Mughal activities—expelling Mughal officers from Jodhpur, prohibiting cow-slaughter and *azan*. Jai Singh was appointed governor of Malwa and he accepted it. But Ajit Singh, appointed governor of Thatta, refused as he expected Gujrat. At this stage the struggle between the Sayyids and the emperor reached a new phase. Formerly, it was a question of personal ill-will between the Farrukhsiyar and the Sayyids. Now, at the suggestion of his friends, the emperor intrigued against the Sayyids, who did not see eye to eye with the emperor in his Rajput policy. Husain Ali was in secret touch with the Rajputs. Farrukhsiyar wanted to separate the two Sayyids, so as to deal with them one after another. So he secretly wrote to Ajit Singh to defeat and kill Husain Ali. But the plot leaked out. Abdullah, feeling insecure, recalled his brother to maintain his position. At the suggestion of Jai Singh a treaty was made between Husain Ali and Ajit Singh (March 1714). Ajit Singh agreed to give his daughter in marriage to Farrukhsiyar, to send his own