son and to attend the court when called and accept the
governorship of Thattah. But there was a secret clause
by which Ajit would be appointed governor of Gujrat.
This made the jurisdictions of the two Ranas contiguous.
Thus Husain Ali precisely did what he was not
expected to do. In effect it was the beginning of an
alliance between the Sayyids and the Rajputs whose
old demand of contiguous provinces was met.

The offensive against the Sikhs continued in full
swing under Farrukhsiyan. Zainuddin Ahmad Khan,
the new faujdar of Sirhind, chastised Banda, then
sheltering near Sadhaura. The emperor appointed the
skilful Turani general, Abdus Samad Khan, governor of
Lahore and his son, Zakariya Khan, faujdar of Jammu
(1713). The combined forces of Abdus Samad and
Zainuddin Ahmad captured Sadhaura after a ‘fierce
resistance’ from the besieged Sikhs. Banda withdrew
from Lohgarh to the hills. He had to retreat from post
to post, fighting bravely, putting the Mughals to heavy
losses, and repeatedly ravaging the North Punjab (1714).
He was in hiding for a year in a village (Dera Baba
Banda) above Jammu and came down in February 1715.
The alarmed government deputed a strong force consisting
of the Mughals, Pathans, Bundelas, and Rajputs under
Abdus Samad Khan (1715) to crush a ‘sect of mean
and detestable Sikhs’. Finally Banda was besieged at
Gurudaspur (Nangal) and starved into surrender
(17 December 1715) after a stout resistance. His failure
was largely due to desertions and internal schism, orthodox
circles accusing him of making spiritual pretensions
to guruship. At the same time it is to be admitted
that his tactics acted as a boomerang. To prevent the
advance of the Mughal artillery, he had flooded the
country by cutting a canal. But this cut off his own food
supply. He was carried to Delhi in mock state on an
elephant, paraded and severely tortured and subsequently
executed along with 794 dignified and unperturbed Sikhs.
3. Conflict between the Emperor and the Sayyids

The relation between the Sayyids and the emperor was hardly cordial. Now an open breach became inevitable by the end of 1714. The real cause was power politics. The crucial problem was: who was supreme,—the emperor or the Wazir? Like Zulfiqar the Sayyids held that power should be concentrated in the hands of the Wazir. They wanted substance of power. All transactions, appointments and grants were to be made on their advice. No business was to be done without it. On the other hand, the emperor who wanted personal power, held that this demand of the Sayyids would reduce him to a mere figurehead and that the Wazir was a mere adviser and had no independent power.

Differences between the emperor and Abdullah soon arose over some appointments. The candidates of the Sayyids were different from those of the emperor. Ultimately a compromise was made. The emperor's tutor, Afzal Khan, continued to hold the post sadr as against Abdullah's candidate; the latter's nominee, Lutfullah Khan Sadiq, was made Diwan-i-Tan and Muhammad Mutamad Khan as Diwan-i-Khalsa as against the emperor's nominee, Raja Chhabela Ram Nagar, who was made governor of Agra. But this compromise could not abate the differences and the substance of the conflict remained.

The second factor was that the activities of some personal favourites of the king caused discord and confusion. From the beginning the party of the king's
friends was hostile to the Sayyids, and tried to disturb the administration by inducing the emperor to interfere in the ministers' department. The king began to issue secret orders different from what were issued in public. This caused great dislocation in government business. One of these favourites was Mir Jumla, a Turani noble, who had served Azim-us-Shan. The emperor appointed him superintendent of private retinue and audience chamber. Another was Khwaja Asim, entitled 'Khan-i-Dauran', superintendent of Diwan-i-Khas and Mir Atish (Chief of artillery.) who subsequently became the Bakhshi of the emperor's personal troops. Neither of them had any administrative or military experience. But both were ambitious and anti-Sayyid and made 7-hazari. They tried to persuade Farrukhsiyar to oust the Sayyids, who were newcomers, from power. Farrukhsiyar lent a willing ear to Mir Jumla as he would be a subservient tool. The principle of the personal rule of the emperor was supported by his two favourites. They gradually gained a complete ascendancy over the emperor who had no independent judgment. On the other hand, the Sayyids held that the administration should be left in their hands. The series of executions and confiscations after the accession of Farrukhsiyar (the victims including Zulfiqar, Asad Khan and others) were ascribed by the people to the influence of Mir Jumla, who himself aspired to power from the destruction of the old nobility. Farrukhsiyar himself had his younger brother blinded to prevent the Sayyids from having a possible substitute for himself. These events widened the rupture between the emperor and the Sayyids.

Another difference arose over the occupation of the residences of Zulfiqar and Kokaltash by the Sayyids. This was interpreted so as to imply that the Sayyids appropriated the accumulated wealth of the past, while the emperor inherited an empty treasury. In spite of these occasions of ill-will, however, there was
no open rupture at first between the emperor and the Sayyids.

The third cause of difference was the interference of the emperor's favourites in administration with his secret support. Authorised by the emperor, Mir Jumla signed all papers without routing them through the Wazir as was customary, on the ground that 'the word and signature of Mir Jumla are my word and signature'. This was a great blow to the administrative authority of the Sayyid brothers.

On the other hand, the emperor had certain justifiable charges or complaints against the Sayyids. (a) Abdullah, a soldier and a pleasure-seeker, practically left all administrative affairs and urgent state matters in the hands of his Dewan, Ratanchand, a bania, who 'abused his influence over the sleepy minister'. He was haughty, avaricious and took bribes (for himself as well as for Abdullah). Naturally, this was a complaint against Abdullah. Mir Jumla was more businesslike and less extortionate and therefore, more liked by people. Ratanchand persuaded his master to set aside all appointments started by Mir Jumla. (b) Another complaint against the Sayyids was that under Ratanchand the practice of ijara or farming the revenue, though forbidden by Farrukhsiyar, became universal; even crownlands were farmed out. (c) So Mir Jumla tried to impress on the emperor that the Sayyids, being haughty and ease-loving, were unfit for administration and that their continuance would destroy peace and prosperity in the country. By disobeying Farrukhsiyar they lowered the emperor's prestige. In fact, during Husain Ali's absence in Rajputana it was Mir Jumla who was de facto minister, though Abdullah was Wazir in name. Abdullah felt that his position became weak, and that his power was slipping from his grasp and so he recalled his brother, Husain Ali.

To overawe the Sayyids the emperor adopted certain
measures. He increased the military strength of his favourites like Mir Jumla and Khan-i-Dauran and their relatives. On returning from Rajputana Husain Ali tried to save the situation. Husain Ali thought that the best way to maintain their position was to gain control of one of the important provinces and he demanded and secured, in place of Chin Qilich Khan, the viceroyalty of the Deccan which he wanted to rule through a deputy, Daud Khan Panni. But Farrukhsiyar rejected this arrangement and asked him to go personally to the Deccan, on the advice of Mir Jumla who had, however, followed the practice himself in Bengal. Husain Ali refused to go to the Deccan leaving his brother alone at the court. Like Bahadur Shah, Farrukhsiyar apprehended the combination of the three important posts of Wazir, Mir Bakhshi and viceroy of the Deccan to be a danger to the emperor. But the Sayyids regarded this order as a move to crush them separately. Then Farrukhsiyar objected to the private agreement between Husain Ali and Ajit Singh and delayed the confirmation of Ajit’s appointment as governor of Gujrat. Husain Ali also learnt of the plot to murder him. So the two brothers shut themselves up on the defensive in their own well-guarded houses and even offered to resign.

The emperor was in a dilemma. Neither he nor his advisers dared to face an open trial of strength. Both Mir Jumla and Khan-i-Dauran were ‘carpet-knights’, not true soldiers. Being afraid to measure swords with the Sayyids they advised the emperor to negotiate with Muhammad Amin Khan, an experienced fighter and second Bakhshi. The latter demanded the post of Wazir as the price of his help. But that would be a remedy worse than the disease itself.

The emperor had tried a policy of force but failed. He now tried compromise. Messengers were sent to the Sayyids. Even the emperor’s mother visited them and took oaths personally on behalf of her son. By a com-
promise solution (December 1714) both Mir Jumla and Husain Ali were to go to their respective provinces; after the departure of Mir Jumla, Husain Ali would pay respects to the emperor. Accordingly Mir Jumla left for Bengal (16 December 1714) and Husain Ali left for the Deccan in May 1715. Husain Ali was given complete authority for appointments, dismissals and transfers. Before leaving Husain warned the emperor that he would himself return from the Deccan if Abdullah was molested or if Mir Jumla returned or was recalled. Cordiality seemed to have been restored between the emperor and his ministers.

Significance: The first confrontation between the emperor and the Sayyids was an apparent victory of the latter. The emperor could not displace them and he had even to accept the humiliation of handing over the charge of the fort to their men before they came for audience. The ministers dictated and the emperor accepted their terms. But really speaking this incident revealed the actual weakness of the Sayyids who had to accept a compromise. In the first place, the monarch and some influential nobles including Muhammad Amin Khan were against the Sayyids. Secondly, the Barha clan was too small a group to render adequate help when needed. The Deccan with its immense resources would be a strong territorial basis for them. They had to yield on a very important issue. Husain Ali had to give up his original idea of ruling the Deccan through a deputy and had to go there personally. Thirdly, they had to give up the post of Mir Bakhshi to Khan-i-Dauran, a favourite of the emperor. Of course, Mir Jumla went to Bihar but he remained a constant source of danger. Fourthly, the compromise did not improve the relation between the Sayyids and the emperor. The latter's continued hostility towards them was seen in his secret instructions to Daud Khan Panni (transferred to Burhanpur) to resist Husain Ali. Daud Khan was, however, killed in battle (September 1715)
and Husain Ali got new proof of the treachery and duplicity of his master in the latter’s secret letters which were seized by him. Again the Sayyids had to deal with the powerful Turani group. If the Nizam who resented his supercession in the Deccan by Husain Ali joined the emperor along with Muhammad Amin Khan, the position of Abdullah would become critical. So no basic problems were solved. Abdullah remained alone to face a treacherous master in a hostile atmosphere.

The departure of Husain Ali for the Deccan was an important landmark in the struggle between Farrukhsiyar and his ministers. A new stage now began. Both sides began to seek friends and strengthen their position. Both tried to win over old nobles like the Nizam and Muhammad Amin Khan and also to enlist the Rajput rajas to his side. The Sayyids tried to win over new elements, including the Jats and the Marathas, besides the old nobles and Rajputs.

After the departure of Husain Ali to the Deccan, Farrukhsiyar wanted to get a suitable instrument or intermediary to get rid of the Sayyids. Hence one of the methods that the emperor thought of was to detach Jai Singh II from the Sayyids. Husain Ali espoused Bhim Singh against Budh Singh in Kotah-Bundi dispute. The Sayyids also tacitly supported the Jats under Churaman. For both these reasons Jai Singh II was dissatisfied. Farrukhsiyar failed to subdue Churaman and he suspected that he was helped secretly by the Sayyids. So the Jat war forged a Sayyid-Jat alliance and strained the relations between Farrukhsiyar and Sayyids.

Gradually events drifted towards the brink. The emperor felt the need of raising the old ‘Alamgiri nobles’ as a counterpoise to the Sayyids. He tried to remedy his earlier mistaken policy against them by appointing an ‘Alamgiri noble’ Inayatullah Kashmiri Diwan-i-Tan-o-Khalsa, imperial revenue minister, and absentee governor of Kashmir (April 1717) only after an understanding:
with the Wazir: Inayatullah would consult the Wazir in all revenue matters and Abdullah should attend office regularly and not leave everything in the hands of his own diwan. The new minister tried to sweep the administration clean of the prevailing abuses and to restore the Alamgiri rules and discipline.

But disagreement soon arose. The jizyah was reimposed on the strength of the opinion of the Sharif of Mecca. Inayatullah also proposed to reduce or resume the assignments secured by officials fraudulently or in excess of legal dues. Both these measures were aimed at improving the financial situation of the state and checking administrative decline. But the Hindus disliked the jizyah which largely affected the petty officials and middle class elements and determined to oppose him. By his second measure, i.e. resumption, Inayatullah created numerous enemies in that corrupt Mughal court, particularly Ratanchand and his Hindu and Hindusthani friends and underlings. Abdullah refused to give up farming-protected corrupt officers and took up the cause of those whose lands were resumed: Thus the Sayyids became the champion of the Hindus and Hindusthanis.

But this was not merely a struggle between Hindusthanis and the Mughals, as represented by contemporary and later writers, because (1) the Sayyids did not try to monopolise the higher posts for themselves. They did not attempt at monopoly of power. They tried to reconcile old ‘Alamgiri nobles’ and give high posts to men like Muhammad Amin Khan, who were not deprived of office. (2) The struggle was personal and political, cutting across racial and religious groups. (3) The third and real issue was whether the elements like Marathas and Jats should be associated with the Rajputs among the higher ranks of the nobility, in other words, whether a balance could be struck in politics. The Sayyids gradually drifted towards an alliance with Marathas and Jats and individual Rajput chieftains and tried to broaden the
basis of the state on the support of the Hindus, and follow a policy of religious toleration as in the days of Akbar. But their policy came to be opposed by one section which tried to protect the privileges of a narrow group. They also raised the cry of religion in danger. They accused the Sayyids of being pro-Hindu and tried to revert to the orthodox policy of Aurangzeb. Therefore, the struggle revolved round the character of the state. But for both the parties it was mainly a question of power. So the main problem was power politics. (S. Chandra)

The Sayyid-Maratha Pact (Feb. 1718): At first Husain Ali continued the anti-Maratha policy of his predecessor, the Nizam, and opposed the Maratha claim for chauth and sardeshmukhi. But as the Marathas began to plunder different places he realised that the Marathas could not be cowed down. Again the emperor secretly asked Shahu and all zamindars and diwans of the Karnataka to oppose Husain Ali. Farrukhsiyar began to interfere in the appointments in the Deccan. Thus Husain's authority almost dwindled to nothing. After several months' negotiations with the Marathas he concluded a pact with them in February 1718. By it (i) Shahu was given the swarajya of Shivaji and the right to collect chauth and sardeshmukhi from six provinces of the Deccan with his own men; (ii) The recent Maratha conquests in the Deccan, Berar, Gondwana and the Karnataka were confirmed; (iii) Shahu was to pay tribute of 10 lakhs and maintain a force of 15,000 cavalry for keeping peace and order and for use by the Deccan viceroy; (iv) No taxes were to be claimed except the established ones; (v) For sardeshmukhi Shahu agreed to pay the customary tribute to the Mughals. Clearly Husain Ali won over the Marathas. But the emperor did not ratify this pact. It was directed against him; the 'vile enemy', the Marathas, must not be made a partner in revenue and administration. Shahu collected the dues and sent a force to Husain Ali. In a sense, however, the agreement
was against the interests of the empire. The recognition of the right of chauth and sardeshmukhi was inevitable but their collection through Maratha officers created an imperium in imperio. But all this was largely due to Farrukh's own actions, which drove the Sayyids to the Marathas.

4. The Deposition of Farrukh

The pact with the Marathas gave the Sayyids the desired superiority. Farrukh tried to drive out the Marathas and weaken the hold of Husain Ali in Northern Deccan by posting his own nominees. There was a rumour of a war with Husain Ali. The latter set aside the nominations of the emperor, who in turn planned to arrest Abdullah in August. But it leaked out. Abdullah naturally increased the personal troops. In despair Farrukh, now tried to get the support of some old anti-Sayyid nobles. The total estimated strength of the emperor was 70-80,000 horse, as against Abdullah's 15-30,000. But because of his own short-sightedness the expected combination of his father-in-law, Ajit Singh, Nizam-ul-Mulk and Sarbuland Khan did not materialise. Farrukh, now selected a new favourite, Md. Murad Kashmiri, an old 'Alamgiri noble', to be Wazir. Murad Kashmiri, a braggart, gradually ingratiated himself into the emperor's favours and secretly proposed plans for destroying the Sayyids. With blind confidence Farrukh promoted him as superintendent of the imperial harem (entitled Itiqad Khan, May 1718). But the Kashmiri, knowing his limitations, and lacking courage, shirked in execution of the plot and suggested Sarbuland Khan to be its principal instrument. One by one Farrukh alienated old nobles like Khan-i-Dauran; the Nizam deprived of the faujdari of Moradabad; Sarbuland Khan, deprived of his Bihar governorship; Md. Amin Khan, dismissed for failure to check Husain Ali in Malwa; and Ajit Singh,

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dismissed from Gujrat. Abdullah now wisely won over these discontented nobles to his side by promising some of them important posts. The pro-Sayyid Ajit, convinced of the deceitfulness of Farrukhsiyar, joined the Wazir. Clearly enough all the anti-Sayyid plots proved to be immature and ended in nothing but talk.

By the end of 1718 the emperor became completely isolated; only Jai Singh and a few others were by his side. From their vantage position the Sayyids could dictate terms to him. Three courses were open to them: (a) to depose the emperor and assume royalty themselves; (b) to depose him and place a pliant Mughal prince; (c) to retain him but deprive him of all controlling power. The first course was unworkable and never seriously considered. Between the other two Abdullah favoured the third. The emperor recalled Mir Jumla from Lahore in September 1718. This violated the former agreement and gave a valid excuse to Husain Ali to move northwards (Dec. 1718) without permission with a Maratha army. Haughty and impatient, he wanted to depose Farrukhsiyar. So a tussle between the two brothers began. In a meeting attended by Ajit Singh in February 1719, it was decided that before Husain Ali would visit the emperor all important posts guarding royal presence and attendance were to be given to the nominees of the Sayyids. Delhi fort would virtually remain under their control. Jai Singh was to leave for Amber. Farrukhsiyar yielded on the advice of Murad Kashmiri on certain conditions. Husain Ali interviewed Farrukhsiyar after posting his own men. But the latter delayed the transfer of offices and retired to the harem. The emperor's favourites, Murad and royal guards, were driven out; but the Wazir wanted to retain the emperor and asked them to come out. Farrukhsiyar refused. The deposition of the emperor was suggested even by some nobles and the younger brother asked his elder to do the job or give him the opportunity to do it. After considerable
discussions, Abdullah finally accepted the recommendation of the supporters of the Sayyids. Farrukhisiyar was dragged out, blinded and imprisoned and later strangled towards the end of April 1719. Rafi-ud-Darajat was placed on the throne. Thus the ‘agitated and perplexing’ reign of Farrukhisiyar ended in an ‘imperial tragedy’.

Conduct of the Sayyid Brothers: Contradictory opinions have been expressed on the conduct of the Sayyids towards the emperor. On the one hand the Sayyids and Shi'ahs defended their action as the only course left. On the other hand, the rivals of the Sayyids denounced their conduct as being disloyal. None of these views can be fully accepted. It was not unjustifiable or wrong to remove a worthless emperor who had proved treacherous and deceitful in different ways and set a new precedent in dealing with the undesirables. For seven years the state passed through a period of instability. Farrukhisiyar was ‘strong neither for evil nor for good’ and, as Irvine says, ‘it is impossible either to admire or regret him’. But the Sayyids were ministers and ‘their way of doing what had become almost a necessity was unduly harsh’, utterly regardless of the personal dignity of the monarch. In those days, blinding a deposed king was a normal practice and the Sayyids just followed the prevailing custom. For this they cannot be blamed specifically but ‘the severity of the subsequent confinement was excessive’ and killing him in captivity was ‘an extremity entirely uncalled for ...’. According to one writer, Shah Nawaz Khan, the Sayyids were forced to do this in order to save their own lives and honour. But the same historian also says that it would have been nobler for them to have given up the struggle and retire to a distant place leaving the service and go on to Mecca. But it is not always open for men to rise superior to their passions. The Sayyids fell a victim to their own passions. In future they themselves met a violent fate. On the other hand, it may be said that execution of Farrukhisiyar was unnecess-
sarily cruel and it was a logical corollary to his deposition. The Sayyids could never feel secure for their lives and honour so long as he was alive and the main problem for them was to decide whether they could realise their object without deposition. Abdullah felt they could do so as long as the important offices were controlled by them. The primary responsibility for the deposition was Husain Ali's. The deposition created a fear in minds of many nobles about the intention of the Sayyids. It alienated their own supporters who were not prepared for such an extreme step. Before the execution the Sayyids might have gained some praise for their bravery in fighting their ungrateful master. But after the deposition, the Sayyids came to be regarded as tyrants and treacherous to the salt of the emperor. All contemporary writers condemned the deposition as a disgraceful act. Considering the weakness of their actual position, it was a political blunder on their part. Abdullah himself regretted the deposition and blamed his brother for this. In destroying Farrukhsiyar the Sayyids destroyed their effective protection against the old nobles. The rival Turani group now came forward to champion the cause of the outraged monarchy and royal family. They used the public revulsion against the Sayyids. The Sayyids had now to solve many problems of the empire but it became extremely difficult for them to do so.

APPENDIX

*Early History of the Sayyid Brothers*

They claimed descent from a family of Mesopotamia. One of their ancestors came to India and settled in India in Sirhind long before the Mughals appeared in India. They became thoroughly Indianised, marrying here, founding settlements, and gaining importance from the time of Akbar onwards. There is some difference
of opinion about their name, 'Barha' Sayyids. One view is that the family settled at Barha between Meerut and Saharanpur in the upper Ganga-Yamuna doab. The other view is that they came from Barah, a group of 12 villages in that area. Though brave fighters and excellent commanders they became notorious for their ambition and unreliability. Aurangzeb had a very poor opinion about them. But it was during his reign that Abdullah held administrative and military posts fighting against the Marathas and becoming powerful. Abdullah joined Jahandar Shah, then Governor of Multan, while Husain Ali was appointed faujdar of Ranthambhar. At the battle of Jajau (1707) the Sayyid brothers fought well on the side of Bahadur Shah but they were not satisfied with the rewards given. Husain Ali became (1708) deputy of Azim-us-Shan, governor of Bihar and three years after Abdullah Khan was appointed deputy of Azim-us-Shan, governor of Allahabad (1711). So both of them were indebted to Azim-us-Shan. But they did not support him when Bahadur Shah died. However, when Farrukhsiyar, the second son of Azim and his father's deputy in Bengal, who had been recalled to court, got the news of Bahadur Shah's death, he proclaimed his father as king. But this was not liked by Husain Ali. When Azim-us-Shan was defeated and killed, Husain Ali wanted to draw back. But Farrukhsiyar's mother appealed to him in espousing the cause of the family. Ultimately Husain Ali agreed to join Farrukhsiyar, partly because of his dislike of Jahandar Shah and jealousy of the position of Zulfiqar Khan and partly in expectation of future gain. But this did not mean that the relation between Farrukhsiyar and Husain Ali was quite cordial. As a matter of fact there was mutual ill-will and suspicion between Farrukhsiyar and the Sayyid Brothers.

(1) Husain Ali was afraid of the cunning and deceitful nature of Farrukhsiyar. (2) Pressed for money, Farrukhsiyar wanted to levy contributions on all rich
merchants including Europeans and to plunder the town of Patna. Farrukhsiyyar offered Husain Ali 1/4 share if he did not oppose the agreement. But Husain Ali disagreed. (3) Difference of opinion arose on other points also. Outwardly these were papered over. But it is difficult to say how far these differences were personal or on matters of policy. At the suggestion of Husain Ali Farrukhsiyyar then in Bihar abolished the *jizyah* in 1713. Abdullah Khan (at Allahabad) tried to resolve the ill-will between Husain Ali and Farrukhsiyyar. Between the two brothers, Abduallah, the elder, was tactful and a better manager of events than Husain Ali, the younger. Abdullah was appointed by Azim-us-Shan in the post as governor of Allahabad (1711) but he plundered the treasures from Bengal at the time of Bahadur Shah's death. But as this was not likely to be excused by Jahandar, Abdullah negotiated with Farrukhsiyyar, who confirmed him in the post.

IV. MUHAMMAD SHAH (1719-48)

*Wazirs*:

Abdullah Khan Sayyid 1719-20
Muhammad Amin Khan 1720-21
Itimad-ud-Daula I

Inayatullah Khan

Kashmiri (*Temp.*)

Chin Qilich Khan 1721-22
Nizam-ul-Mulk

Qamaruddin Khan 1722-24
Itimad-ud-Daula II 1724-48

Raushan-ud-Daula (for a while).

*Character of Muhammad Shah*

'Muhammad Shah demands our pity if he may not command our obedience' (Wolseley Haig). The then
situation required a superman. He was but an ordinary mortal. In private character he had some good qualities. He was not proud, capricious or cruel. He was considerate for others. He had the courage to court imprisonment by Nadir Shah in order to save his capital and subjects instead of escaping to Bengal for personal safety. But he was weak and inexperienced, indolent and doubtful of his own ability. Ascending the throne at the age of seventeen without any schooling or proper education for a king and general, having been confined to the palace for the preceding seven years, this young and handsome youth, sunk in pleasure, wine and women, for which he was nick-named Rangila, addicted to opium which impaired his strong constitution, shunning public business, public administration of justice, or even state councils, seldom stirring out of Delhi or making military movements (except twice), but witnessing elephant fights or bear-baiting, and frequenting the company of faqirs (towards the end of his life), became just a cypher in administration, a puppet controlled by shrewd favourites. Yet, paradoxically enough, he was not so weak as his two predecessors and he was intelligent and had foresight. In this blissful paradise of monarchical abeyance and virtual anarchy, the nobles scrambled for political power and land. Though agreeing with good advice of Wazirs and ministers, he lacked courage to implement it, till a crisis was precipitated. Yet, in his defence it may be said that in that age of monarchical instability he could survive for nearly 30 years on, account of the self-same weaknesses for which he has been blamed,—his fondness for pleasure and neglect of administration. His inaction, arising from his grasp of realities of the day, was in a sense, highly expedient. The situation was so hopeless and tragic that it could hardly have been rectified even if he had devoted himself to business, instead of to pleasure. Forewarned by the fate of his predecessors at the hands of king-makers, he refrained, in sheer helplessness, from
any attempt to rule or control the nobles. He showed his 'cleverness' in thus keeping the rotten foundations of the state standing.

**Divisions of the Reign**

The reign of Muhammad Shah falls into three unequal periods:

(A) Period of new Wizarat of the Sayyids, 1719-20;
(B) From his release from the Sayyid yoke to the invasion of Nadir Shah, 1720-39;
(C) Post-Nadir Shah Period till the emperor's death (1739-48).

Each period had its respective characteristics. During the first the Hindustani Sayyids were all-powerful dictators but they met with their doom as a result of the co-operation of the Turani and Irani groups. During the second period four Turani nobles served as Wazirs, but the emperor's favourites were mostly Irans, thereby intensifying the party rivalry. In the third period the blow of Nadir stupefied the court no doubt but no lesson was learnt and the process of disintegration was accelerated.

**A. PERIOD OF NEW WIZARAT (1719-20)**

Notwithstanding some relaxation of control, Muhammad Shah was powerless in administration.

(i) *Problem of Appointments:* In the provinces and other important appointments, governors and officers were confirmed without change so that the New Wizarat and transfer of power might not appear to be a total break with the past or too violent. But some changes were inevitable. The property and mansabs of some personal favourites of Farrukhsiyar were confiscated but those of many more were spared (like Khan-i-Dauran and Mir Jumla). No bloody executions were made. Only the subahdaris of Agra and Allahabad and the faujdari of Moraqabad were...
given to the Barhas and their dependents. The Sayyids did not attempt to monopolise the high posts, for they had to stabilise their power, gain control of all parts of the empire and did not want to raise opponents. A conciliatory policy was necessary to have a strong block of supporters in and outside the court.

(ii) Rebellions: But the efforts of the Sayyids to rule through the medium of an imperial puppet were not very successful. Two centres of opposition were soon formed at Agra and Allahabad. At Agra, a Timurid prince named Nekusiyar was proclaimed emperor (1719). Jai Singh of Amber is said to have supported this because of his policy of opposition to the Sayyids. The Nizam was also approached. But though Abdullah was inclined to accept him, Husain Ali refused. The rebellion was confined to Agra and not generally supported. At Allahabad, its governor, Chhabela Ram Nagar, rebelled (August 1719) in apprehension that the Sayyids wanted to transfer him to Oudh and occupy the strong fort of Allahabad. After his death his nephew Giridhar Bahadur continued the rebellion. These two rebellions lasted for fourteen months. Agra surrendered after three months in August 1719, while Allahabad was surrendered by Girdhar Bahadur in May 1720. Girdhar Bahadur was appointed governor of Oudh but he did not trust the Sayyids.

(iii) Political Problems: The two rebellions illustrated the military weakness of the Sayyids. They realised that they must proceed cautiously with regard to the political problems which they had to solve.

(a) Attitude towards the Hindus

(i) General: One of these problems was the consolidation and extension of alliance with the Rajputs, the Marathas and the Jats, so as to win over Hindus. The jizyah was abolished at the request of Ajit Singh after the deposition of Farrukhsiyar. His queen, Ajit Singh's.
widowed daughter, was allowed to give up Islam and return home with all her wealth and property against the opinion of the Qazi and to the indignation of the Muslims. Khafi Khan described this as 'unprecedented'.

(ii) Rajputs: Negotiations were made through Ajit Singh with the hostile Jai Singh Sawai, who was appointed faujdar of Sorath in Ahmadabad. Ajit Singh was given charge of Ajmer and Gujrat. Thus these two Rajput rajas constituted a very strong group. In spite of Ajit Singh's pleading for the Sayyids Jai Singh, who married Ajit's daughter, did not join them. Nor did he join the Nizam against them. The Sayyids could not succeed with the Rajputs except in the case of Ajit Singh.

(iii) Marathas: The old Sayyid-Maratha pact of 1718 was now strengthened by formal imperial grants, under Muhammad Shah's signature, of chauth and sardeshmukhi to the Marathas. The Maratha allies of Husain Ali carried these while returning to the Deccan. But their support, though unpopular, was one of the main sources of strength of the Sayyids in the Deccan. Alam Ali, Husain Ali's deputy, had some connections with the court of Satara through a minister and good relations with Shahu was maintained.

(iv) Jats: With them the Sayyids tried to maintain close bonds. Churaman was given charge of the royal highway from Delhi to Gwalior and he took part in the siege of Agra.

(b) Relations with the Nobility: Party Tensions

Another problem was that of the old Alamgiri and Bahadur Shahi nobles. The Sayyids had no intention to seek monopoly of power or follow a policy of religious or racial exclusiveness. As in the past they tried to win them over and get their co-operation in administration. They were given increments and also appointed to high
posts or confirmed. Abdullah told the Nizam that he preferred old nobles to new and untried men.

It was, however, difficult to implement this policy. The Sayyids were suspected and feared by the nobles on account of the deposition of Farrukhsiyar. Many were jealous and dissatisfied with the supremacy of the two Hindusthanis. Men like the Nizam and Muhammad Amin Khan were ambitious to enjoy supreme power; and if it was not possible they wanted to go away from the court and establish independent principalities of their own. The Marathas, too, cherished high ambitions which conflicted with the attempt of the Sayyids to win them over.

(c) Differences between the Brothers

Lastly, the two brothers differed over personal and political questions, viz., sharing the spoils of victory as well as political power; their attitude towards the nobles, especially the Nizam. To some extent Ratanchand effected a compromise. But the difference was deep-seated. Husain Ali, being more energetic, wanted to dominate over the elder brother. But he was hasty and he did not want the Nizam to remain in the court. He wanted to send the Nizam to Malwa. But Abdullah wanted him to go to Bihar. The overhastiness of Husain Ali (in liquidating political rivals) and his arrogant and tactless behaviour contrasted sharply with the wisdom and moderation of Abdullah and largely accounted for the failure of the Sayyids. Distrusting the Sayyids, the Nizam agreed to go to Malwa as a long term measure and refused to leave his son in the court. A conflict between the Nizam and the Sayyids was inevitable. Both the Turanis and the Iranis, looking down upon the Hindusthani and Indian-born Muslims, supported the monarchy and claimed monopoly of power by excluding the Hindusthani nobles. Many did not like the alliance between the Sayyids and
the Hindus (the Rajputs and the Marathas), the abolition of jizyah and other discriminatory cesses. Many were just waiting to strike at the Sayyids who were considered to be checks to their own individual ambitions. The Sayyids cautiously tried to avoid taking an adamant attitude towards the Nizam, which would be construed as directed against the old nobility. The only alternative was to appoint new, untried men and to give the Rajputs, Marathas and Jats an opportunity to increase their power.

Muhammad Shah was unwilling to remain under the tutelage of the Sayyids. He naturally found many supporters among the enemies of the Sayyids, the ablest of whom was the Turani Nizam.

Revolt of the Nizam: Circumstances soon drifted towards the contingency which the Sayyids wanted to avoid, namely the revolt of the Nizam. This was due to various causes:

(1) The Sayyids had genuine complaints against the Nizam. It was reported that he was collecting men and war materials in Malwa in excess with the object of occupying the Deccan. He had to explain that he did it because he had to check the plundering Maratha bands. But the Sayyids suspected him because he was in concert with the anti-Sayyid Jai Singh. The Nizam also appointed a qiladar dismissed by Husain Ali from the fort of Mandu. Again the Nizam ravaged certain villages of a pargana Nilam and transferred its zamindar against the wishes of the Sayyids. Finally, he was suspected of instigating the rising of Nekusiyar.

(2) Husain Ali wanted to govern the Deccan along with Malwa, Gujrat, Ajmer and Agra personally for two reasons,—(i) to check the vaulting ambition of Satara and to check the expansion of Marathas in Malwa and Gujrat (1719); (ii) to check the secret design of the Nizam to conquer the Deccan. So the Sayyids wanted to divide the empire into two zones between the two brothers.
the North and the South. This division would settle the differences between them. The first step was to remove the Nizam from Malwa and send him to Agra or Allahabad or Burhanpur or Multan. This the Nizam did not want. His attitude was perfectly logical. The Sayyids began to take precautions. Disregarding the orders to go to the court the Nizam crossed the Narmada and moved to the Deccan. He was joined by the governors of Berar and Khandesh. Old nobles, confirmed by the Sayyids, raised anti-Sayyid slogans. The Nizam posed as the champion of the monarchy and of Islam, defender of the Irani and Turani nobles and their racial interests.

Frightened and perplexed, the Sayyid brothers could not frame a common course of action. Distrusting the Mughals, particularly the Turanis, Husain Ali wanted to have Muhammad Amin Khan murdered. Abdullah could not agree with this as being unwise and dishonest. He even wanted to conciliate the Nizam by giving him the Deccan. It was believed that any war (with the Nizam) would end in the annihilation of the Sayyids. Abdullah was supported by Khan-i-Dauran and Ratanchand. The uncompromising Husain Ali had to give up the idea of removing Md. Amin Khan. He planned to attack the Nizam with Maratha support from two sides i.e., a northern army under Dilawar Khan and a southern army under Alam Ali. But the Nizam defeated the northern army in June 1720 and faced the southern army supported by the Marathas under the Peshwa.

In alarm Abdullah again suggested a compromise. But finally the Sayyids planned a double-edged policy: (i) The Nizam was to be appointed viceroy of the Deccan and be asked to allow Alam Ali and the family of Mir Bakhshi to leave the Deccan. (ii) A great army was to be sent to the Deccan and the southern commander (Alam Ali) was to wait. But the Nizam could easily see through the game. He was too shrewd to relax and he turned the tables against the Sayyids by declaring Alam Ali a
rebel for defying imperial authority and not handing over charge of the Deccan to him. The Nizam routed Alam Ali and his Maratha allies at Shakarkheda or Shakarkhera (10 August 1720). Husain Ali was murdered on way to Malwa to punish the Nizam, as plotted by Muhammad Amin Khan. Abdullah somehow tried to maintain his position by raising another puppet to the throne (Ibrahim, brother of Rafi-ud-Daula) with the support of the Sayyids, the Jats, some Afghans and some old nobles. But the cause of Muhammad Shah was supported by the Bangash chief, Muhammad Khan, and Turani noble, Muhammad Amin Khan. Abdullah was defeated near Agra on 13 November 1720 by the imperial army, imprisoned and subsequently poisoned in 1722. So the Wizarat of the Sayyids ended.

Causes of the Failure of the Sayyids

The revolt of the Nizam proved to be the immediate and direct cause of the downfall of the Sayyids. But there were some deep-seated causes of their failure. Their weakness and unpopularity had already stood revealed in relation to the Nizam.

(i) An important factor in their downfall was the opposition of the old nobles who regarded the Sayyids as upstarts and disliked their pro-Hindu policy. The leading part was taken by the small powerful Turani group consisting of capable and ambitious leaders like Nizam and Md. Amin Khan, who did not want to be overshadowed. They interpreted the Sayyid policy of reconciling the Hindus and satisfying the Hindu sentiment by abolishing jizya, as anti-Islam and anti-monarchical. At the same time they appealed to the narrow interests of the small section of the foreign nobles i.e., Mughalia, who were excluded from power. Hence they posed as champions of Islam, of monarchy and the interests of
the Mughal nobles. However, on behalf of the Sayyids it may be said that this interpretation of their policy was incorrect. The Sayyids did not want to monopolise power. They associated various sections in the court, Hindus as well as groups of old nobles with the government. But the anti-Sayyid struggle was characterised as a struggle between Mughals and Hindusthanis.

(ii) To a large extent, the failure of the Sayyids was due to their own blunders. Their biggest political blunder was the deposition of Farrukhsiyar, which enabled the 'Chin' group of nobles to come forward as defenders of the Mughal dynasty. And they utilised the public resentment against the Sayyids for their own interests. The Sayyids also made a mistake in over-estimating their strength and resources. The two brothers disagreed among themselves and caused a premature showdown. They differed as regards the policy towards the 'Chin' group. Abdullah was patient and cautious and hence wiser than Husain Ali. Husain Ali was a rash, haughty and hasty young man and his attitude of destroying the 'Chin' group was unworkable. Such difference in policy accentuated the differences over spoils and power. It may, however, be pointed out that perhaps they failed to make a correct estimation of their own capacity because their tenure of office was short.

(iii) Administrative Failure: The administration was paralysed by the party conflict. Law and order broke down with the risings of zamindars and discontented elements. Rules of business were not followed. Their dependence on their subordinates like Ratanchand showed their administrative incompetence, made them unpopular and increased the tendency to harmful revenue farming, bribery and oppression by the subordinates. Naturally, the Sayyids were blamed for this maladministration, though their capacity was even admitted by anti-Sayyid writers. Their efforts to maintain law and order failed because they could not command the confidence of the.
people. In warfare also they did not show much efficiency as generals.

(iv) Party Conflict: When all is said, it must, however, be admitted that the Sayyid brothers were the victims of the circumstances and spirit of the age. To a large extent they failed because of the party conflicts in that corrupt and confused atmosphere of the court. Concentrating power in themselves they tried to save the empire from disintegration. But here also they failed because no lasting solution could be made of the various problems, viz., the old nobility, problem of the Hindus, problem of the Deccan. In every sphere new problems were created and much of this was due to the bitter party strife prevailing in the court.

They tried to develop a composite ruling aristocracy irrespective of religion or race. But the old 'Alamgiri nobles' did not want to share power while the Maratha sardars were interested in their own domination in the Deccan. Husain Ali's deputy in the Deccan, Alam Ali, rejected Baji Rao's plan of carrying on a harassing warfare against the Nizam. The Rajputs were more interested than the Marathas in maintaining the Mughal empire but neither Ajit Singh nor Jai Singh offered military help needed by the Sayyids. The latter could not secure the support of the nobles and they could not win the backing of the monarchy because of a traditional suspicion between the monarch and all powerful Wazir.

In that age of monarchical decadence and decline of peerage the only strong agency which could maintain the unity of the empire was the Wazir. The Wazir also failed to give the necessary direction in the State. In certain respects the Sayyids tried to follow a secular and national approach as pointed out by Satish Chandra but this was not supported by other powerful sections of the nobles or by the emperor.
INDIA IN 1761

Boundaries of Aurangzeb's empire in 1707 indicated by thick lines in north and south...

Shrunk Mughal territory 1761...

Foreign Possessions as in 1707: BO (British) 1765

Scale

100 0 100 200 300 400 Miles

100 0 100 300 500 Kilometres
B. FROM THE FALL OF THE SAYYIDS TO NADIR SHAH'S INVASION (1720-39)

Muhammad Shah's Wazirs

The fall of the Hindusthani Sayyids did not mean any increase in the power and prestige of Muhammad Shah. During the next 28 years the Turanis came to power with four Turani Wazirs. But they, too, did not actually govern. The selfish intrigues of the nobles and party rivalries characterised his long reign. The first Wazir was Muhammad Amin Khan, surnamed Itimad-ud-Daula I, now created 8-hazari. But he died after about three months only (Nov. 1720-16 January 1721). He was followed temporarily by Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri, an 'Alamgiri noble' (1721-22), as a stop-gap measure. Next, Chin Qilich Khan Nizam-ul-Mulk, viceroy of the Deccan, was appointed Wazir (1722-24) and at the same time governor of Gujrat. Returning therefrom in July 1723 he found himself in an embarrassing and insupportable situation, baulked by the weak emperor on the one hand and by his unscrupulous advisers on the other. The emperor did not support him in his administrative proposals. The courtiers disliked him because of his austere and grave demeanour. Persons exercising the Wazir's functions during his absence did not want to part with them. He found that he was Wazir only in name, without his power. Unpopular and ineffective in the court, he resigned in disgust, returning to the Deccan on a pretence of hunting (Dec. 1723).

The vacant Wizarat was conferred on Nizam-ul-Mulk's cousin, Qamaruddin Khan, Itimad-ud-Daula II, son of Muhammad Amin Khan. He was in power for nearly quarter of a century (1724-48). But as an indolent drunkard his only work was not to do any work at all.
Muhammad Shah’s Favourites and advisers: Ghulam Husain, author of Siyar-ul-Mutakherin, writes that the pleasure-loving and inactive emperor came under the thumb of his favourites, a vulgar woman, Koki-ji and her associates, Raushan-ud-Daula (appointed minister for a time but then dismissed for corruption) and Shah Abdul Ghafur till 1732, and then of Samsam-ud-Daula Khan-i-Dauran and his brother Muzaffar Khan till their death in 1739.

C. POST-NADIR SHAH PERIOD (1739-48)

The blow of Nadir’s invasion (See Ch. 4) stunned the Mughal court,—emperor and his nobles,—for a time. Nothing was done or even proposed in politics for two months. But no lesson was learnt. The proud and self-conceited nobles slept in lethargy and indolence and only woke up to indulge in mutual rivalry and ill-will. Warned by Nadir Shah the emperor grew suspicious of the Nizam and the Turani nobles.

After 1739 Muhammad Shah’s ‘guiding angels’ were four favourite Shiahs Iranis, Amir Khan II Umdat-ul-Mulk, Muhammad Ishaq, Asad Yar and Safdar Jang.

(i) The first was highly connected, being son of Amir Khan I, governor of Kabul under Aurangzeb. His grandmother was a daughter of sister of Mumtaz Mahal. The ablest Bakhshi under Aurangzeb, Ruhulla Khan I, was his paternal uncle. But he was capable neither of war nor civil government and was a mere third Bakhshi. However he was an accomplished, clever and interesting person. Proud of his boundless sway over the emperor he used to despise and insult the nobles like the Wazir and the Nizam.

(ii) A still dearer companion was Muhammad Ishaq Khan I, a petty artillery subaltern but an accomplished speaker with good manners and innate judgment, who highly impressed even Nadir Shah. He quickly rose to
be the diwan of Khalsa, a 6-hazar and entitled Mutamad-ud-Daula but died in April 1740. Both he and his son, Mirza Muhammad (Ishaq Khan II, Najm-ud-Daula) also appointed diwan of Khalsa (1747) were loyal well-wishers and honest advisers. Ishaq I’s daughter (Bahu Begam) was married, according to emperor’s orders, to Shuja-ud-Daula (son of Safdar) and became the mother of Asaf-ud-Daula.

(iii) Asad Yar Khan, an inhabitant of Agra, became darogha of harkarahs (Postmaster General and Head of Intelligence Service) with the rank of 6000 and the title of Asad-ud-Daula. He was very much liked by people because of his well-balanced nature, benevolence, courtesy and consideration for others. He even sold his own jewels and goods to redeem the obligations of Amir Khan, who had once been his patron.

(iv) Safdar Jang (originally Mirza Muqim, entitled Abul Mansur Khan) succeeded his uncle and father-in-law, Sadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk, as Subahdar of Oudh (1739). With a powerful and efficient army, he was ‘the sword arm’ of the Shias in India and the leader of the Irani party.

Naturally party conflict became acute. To undermine the power and influence of the Turani leaders, Qamaruddin Wazir and Nizam Bakhshi, the emperor agreed, at Amir Khan and Ishaq Khan’s advice, to supplant the Wazir by Amir Khan. But the plot leaked out, thanks to Amir Khan’s foolish impatience. Qamaruddin was advised by the Nizam (who cancelled his return to the Deccan) to resign. As Amir Khan was no match for the Turanis, the emperor’s conspiracy failed, and the Khan had to make peace with them. He was now sent as governor of Allahabad. Oudh was now given to Safdar Jang; the Punjab and Multan to Zakariya Khan, son of Khan-i-Dauran. The slothful and depraved Wazir Qamaruddin made a disgraceful conspiracy to recognise the independence of Ali Muhammad Ruhela, the Afghan leader east of Delhi.
This was not to the liking of the Ruhela’s eastern and southern neighbours, Safdar Jang and Amir Khan, who apprised the emperor of the humiliation involved.

Though Muhammad Shah’s reign was long, the affairs of the empire just drifted and the consequences were fatal. Several provinces broke away from the empire. The Marathas established their authority over a large part of the empire. The Jats became independent near Agra. The Sikhs became turbulent in the Punjab while the Ruhela Afghans settled in north Gangetic plain and established the state of Rohilkhand and the several Afghan invasions inflicted a terrible blow on the destiny of the empire. The emperor’s mind constantly moved from one object to another.

V. AHMAD SHAH (1748-54)

Wazirs:

Safdar Jang (1748-53)
Intizam-ud-Daula Khan-i-Khanan (March 1753 - May 1754)
Ghaziuddin Imad-ul-Mulk (June 1754-Jan. 1757)

Character of Ahmad Shah

The only son of Muhammad Shah (22) succeeded him on 18 April 1748 as Ahmad Shah. Denied proper education, intellectual and physical, or training for government and war, and brought up in the harem, he was a good-natured imbecile youth, without any personality or character. Now, on coming to power, he grew to be ‘vicious, dissipated, perfidious, pusillanimous and utterly worthless’ (W. Haig). As already noted, he surrendered himself to the eunuch Javid Khan, his mother’s gallant, in order to drown himself in sensual pleasures. Lacking
courage and ability he was unable to withstand the formidable dangers encircling him on all sides.

Court Politics: Official Changes

The Irani party leader, Safdar Jang of Oudh, was appointed Wazir in May 1748. But for fear of Nizam-ul-Mulk the appointment was kept secret till 19 June and he assumed office on 20 June. Sayyid Salabat Khan (Sadat Khan), Zulfiqar Jang (Amir-ul-Umara) was appointed Mir Bakhshi in place of Nizam-ul-Mulk (deceased, 21 May). Intizam-ud-Daula Khan-i-Khanan (eldest son of late Wazir Qamaruddin and a brother of the Nizam's eldest son's wife) became the second Bakhshi. Ishaq Khan Najm-ud-Daula became Diwan-i-Khalsa, Abdullah Khan Sadr, and Saduddin Khan Khan retained the post of Khan-i-Saman.

As regards provincial appointments, the Punjab (Lahore) continued under Muin-ul-Mulk, (second son of Qamaruddin Wazir); Allahabad was finally added to Oudh under Safdar Jang; while Ajmer was combined with Agra under Salabat Khan (Allahabad and Agra being exchanged between them for strategic defence purposes); Bengal (under Alivardi) and Malwa (under the Peshwa, 1741) were left undisturbed. To recover Gujrat from the Marathas Bakht Singh Rathor, the bravest living Rajput, was appointed its governor (29 June) but he declined the 'barren honour'. The viceroyalty of the Deccan was given after about a year to Nasir Jang, second son of late Nizam, and entitled Nizam-ud-Daula; but his elder brother Ghaziuddin then at Delhi claimed the post in 1751.

All these official changes were made by the nobles without reference to the emperor. The latter, in turn, sought to form a court party or 'cabal' of his personal supporters, eunuchs and women, pitted against the high officers. Weak in character and utterly senseless, he became a tool in the hands of Javid Khan (50), superin-
tendent of the harem, and the gallant of his mother, Udham Bai, formerly a dancing girl. The emperor surrendered his kingly duties to these two, who were publicly scandalized as the ass (Nawab Bahadur) and the bitch (Queen-mother). The former pandered to the emperor's vices and sensual pleasures and sought to destroy his weak intellect through excessive drinking. The latter was ambitious to assert her greatness and grasp money.

During Safder Jang's rebellion the emperor dismissed him and appointed Intizam-ud-Daula Wazir with the title of Qamaruddin Khan Bahadur and Itimad-ud-Daula (13 May 1753 - May 1754). He was ease-loving (like his father), and timid, lacking martial instincts or capacity. The record of this unfit Wazir was disgraceful. Soon there came another revolution in fortune; not only of the Wazir but also of the emperor.

Ghaziuddin Imad-ul-Mulk: Shihabuddin (b. 1736) was the son of Ghaziuddin Firuz Jang, the eldest son of Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah. His puritan father brought him up strictly. He was a linguist, a calligraphist, an accomplished scholar and a poet. He was also valorous in battle and displayed unusual enterprise and leadership. When his father was murdered in 1752, he became Mir Bakhshi with the help of Safdar Jang. As he was a person of importance, both the emperor and Safdar Jang sought his help. The former gave him his father's titles Ghaziuddin Khan Bahadur and Firuz Jang. Through the latter he got the title of Amir-ul-Umara. But though able he was thoroughly unscrupulous, ambitious, avaricious and cruel and soon became 'one of the monsters of Delhi history'. At first he joined the emperor and his court partly to ensure Safdar Jang’s resignation of some additional offices besides that of Wazir and governorship of Oudh. Then, terrorising the emperor with Maratha Holkar's help, he became Wazir in place of Intizam-ud-Daula on 1 June 1754, and the next day the emperor was deposed (and blinded with his mother after a week). Azizuddin, the
second but eldest surviving son of Jahandar Shah was made king. During Ahmad Shah’s reign the extent of the empire became limited to a small district round Delhi.

VI. ALAMGIR II (1754-59)

Wazirs:
Imad-ul-Mulk (1 June, 1754-25 Jan., 1757;
Vakil-i-mutlaq Feb. 19, 1757;
Wazir again, 18 March, 1757-29 Nov. 1759)
Intizam-ud-Daula (26 Jan.-19 Feb. 1757)
Ali Gauhar, deputy Wazir (19 Feb. 1757)

Ascending the throne at the age of 55, the new King, aspiring to emulate Aurangzeb, assumed the title of Alamgir II (2 June 1754). Since his father’s death in 1713 he had grown up in ‘poverty and neglect’ without any schooling for war and government or any practical experience. Intelligent, polite and sober, he used to spend his time in reading, giving up dance and song, attending to prayers and learning by heart Aurangzeb’s administrative regulations and practices. As emperor he attended court regularly, reading petitions and passing orders. But unlike his great-grandfather he had no contact with the army and no martial exercises and now, in the evening of his life, indulged in the pleasures of the harem. He was singularly lacking in ‘strength of character and capacity for leadership’. He openly admitted that he was his Wazir’s puppet and could not rule. The nominal king was a mere shadow and the Wazir was the real king.

The tragedy, however, lay in the fact that the all-powerful king-maker, Wazir and dictator, Imad-ul-Mulk, was hardly more potent and effective as administrator than the king. He had money; he had a strong army, consisting of the Badakhshis and the Marathas; but, mean and sensual, without character and capacity, he could
hardly be 'the regenerator' of the fallen empire, while his selfish vanity stood in the way of his seeking help from others.

He was ever afraid of being deposed. There was the ex-Wazir, Intizam-ud-Daula. Imad's Maratha allies might desert him for irregular payment. Shuja-ud-Daula of Oudh regarded the Wizarat as his hereditary legacy and had Suraj Mal Jat as a friend. Najib Khan Ruhela, his erstwhile retainer, flouted him, violated his harem, usurped his jagirs and even the crownlands.

Again, Imad lacked political foresight and his diplomacy was hardly wise. He had paid a heavy price to purchase Maratha alliance (since June, 1754 viz., 13 lakhs annually for every 5000 men), and he was constantly defaulting. So he dreamt of setting up an anti-Maratha coalition. His acceptance of Abdali's idea of driving the Marathas from the Ganga-Jamuna doab and Shuja from his domains (April-June 1757) was 'ill-judged and ill-timed'. This alienated the Marathas, Shuja and the Jats and left him completely isolated. The Abdali was also highly annoyed with him for various lapses (March 1756-Jan. 1757). Jealous of the crown-prince, Ali Gauhar, he attacked him but the latter managed with great difficulty to escape through Oudh to Bihar (1758-59). It was at Imad's dictation that the emperor even disowned the activities of his eldest and ablest son. Finally when the Marathas failed to crush Najib-ud-Daula and to retain the Punjab, the desperate, mad and bankrupt Wazir, alarmed at the news of the approach of the Abdali, had the emperor murdered (29 Nov. 1759) and his own uncle, ex-Wazir Intizam-ud-Daula, strangled the next day.

Thus Imad failed in diplomacy and administration alike. The government grew bankrupt for lack of revenue collection and internal disorders. Rightly has Sarkar observed: 'There has never been a Wazir of Delhi whose rule was so barren of good result and so full
of misery to himself and to the empire, to his friends and foes alike, as Imad-ul-Mulk's. 'His whole reign was marked by utter futility, public misfortune and administrative breakdown'.

VII. SHAH ALAM II (23 Dec. 1759-1806).

Wazirs:
Imad-ul-Mulk, nominated by Ahmad Abdali
(March, 176!);
Shuja-ud-Daula, nominated by Shah Alam
24 Dec. 1759, invested 15 Feb. 1762

Character of Shah Alam II

Mirza Abdullah, entitled Ali Gauhar (1754) and Shah Alam (1756), eldest son of Alamgir II, then in exile and of 30 years of age, proclaimed himself emperor as Shah Alam II (23 December 1759) within a month of his father's assassination. He excites our pity but evokes no applause. He had both good and bad qualities, which respectively predominated before and after his restoration to his ancestral throne in 1772. Ablest of all the living Timurids then, he was at first free from sloth and vice, and in many ways far superior to his predecessors during the last 45 years. Twenty-five years of captivity, poverty and neglect stood in the way of his gaining practical experience and developing his faculties to the full. Then came five years of escape from that monstrous dictatorial Wazir, Imad-ul-Mulk. Adversity had taught him certain good qualities, —self control, value of study and enquiry and devotion to religion. He had also a brief experience of administration and war. We can form an estimate of his character and personality from the accounts of some contemporary personages, Jean Law, Ghulam Ali, Verelst, Comte de Modave and Major Antonie Louis Polier. The picture is
sometimes pleasing and at times unfavourable. He impressed his observers as being fairly well-educated through regular private study and spirit of enquiry and reflection. He knew several eastern languages, Arabic, Persian, Turki and Hindustani. He loved Hindi *dohas* and was a good writer and poet himself and used to copy books himself, e.g., the Quran. His wide correspondence testified to his literary and mental faculties. He courted the company not only of scholars, poets and writers but also of saints. His mental outlook was widened by his wanderings and adventures while his dealings with the French and the English enabled him to gather a general knowledge of affairs.

Thus initially Shah Alam’s character appeared quite promising. But he failed to be ‘the redeemer of the fallen monarchy’. Sir Jadunath Sarkar attributes his failure to unfavourable circumstances and want of right type of ministers,—in fine ‘the moral decay of the Mughal nobility’. ‘It was the tragedy of his life that he was called upon to set right a world that was out of joint morally even more politically.’

There is, of course, much force in this view. But this does not take into consideration the weaknesses of Shah Alam’s own character. In fact he was by no means outstanding in genius and energy. His qualities were essentially mediocre, ‘rather calculated for private life than a throne. He is religious as a man; affectionate as a father; and humane, as a master; but as a prince, he is weak, indolent, irresolute and easily swayed by the counsels of self-interested men ....’. (Verelst in 1768)

After his restoration to Delhi there was a marked decline in his character. He became superstitious, avaricious, slothful, indolent and a confirmed pleasure-seeker in a harem of 500. He became prone to flattery, irresolute and indecisive in his activities, due perhaps to an ‘infatuated attachment to unworthy favourites’ and blind confidence in ministers, who were ‘prodigal and rapacious’ (except
Najaf Khan) and 'abused the generosity of their sovereign' by committing enormities and oppression.

*Shah Alam's Instruments*: Imad-ul-Mulk, the Wazir of Delhi, the nominee of the Peshwa and the Jats, was the sworn and deadly enemy of the emperor. The Wazir, intellectually keen but no longer energetic and capable as before, was licentious and slothful, full of deception and revoltingly cruel, coward and hypocrite.

Najib-ud-Daula, the powerful Ruhela chieftain, could have been the emperor's prop but that would have led Imad to court the Marathas again. In that case Najib could get the costly help of Ahmad Shah Abdali. But Najib was unwilling to take any risk or make any sacrifice. Again, to fly to the arms of Najib would be to commit suicide in view of the Afghan dream of empire.

The only other alternative was to seek the help of Shuja-ud-Daula, Nawab of Oudh. In this coalition, for recovery of lost provinces and humbling rebellious vassals, Shuja was the 'actual manager', Shah Alam was the 'sleeping partner', lending the halo of his name. But for Wazirship Shuja would be worse than even Imad. Shuja was not a military genius, and lacked valour or courage. He was deceitful and treacherous, ungenerous, rapacious and sordid in money matters, and indulged in uncontrolled venery in a harem of 800.