CHAPTER V
ADMINISTRATIVE DECLINE (1707-65)

Section A
THE BACKGROUND

Structure and Spirit

The general administrative organization of the state, central, provincial and local, built by Sher Shah and Akbar, broke down completely in the eighteenth century. But administrative decline was not a sudden and precipitate development after 1707. It was a slow and gradual process. Signs of decline had appeared since the days of Jahangir, particularly in revenue administration, and continued in the time of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. These emperors, by virtue of their strong personality, were able to keep the forces of dissolution under check to an appreciable extent but could not wholly eradicate these. As a result of Aurangzeb's conflicts with the various regional nationalities, the Rajputs, Jats, Sikhs, the Marathas, as well as the long Deccan wars, administration in Northern India grew slack. Towards the end of his reign financial crisis coupled with a crisis in the jagirdari system, enveloped the entire government and clouded the administrative and military efficiency alike. However, in spite of the earlier cracks the outward framework or structure of the government survived and remained standing down to the eighteenth century, though its inner spirit was gone, just as the shape of the human body remains intact in an electric crematorium even after the burning is over before it is shaken up. Indo-Mughal civilization was now like a spent bullet without any capacity of doing good.' (Sarkar).
Factors in administrative decline

After 1707 administrative decline, especially in the realm of finance and revenue, and growing military inefficiency became a marked feature of the Mughal empire as a cumulative effect of several factors,—political, military and socio-economic, viz., (i) the abeyance of the monarchy and the decline in the nobility; (ii) frequent internal disturbances; (iii) foreign invasions; and (iv) socio-economic forces.

But these above-mentioned factors, though highly significant, merely touch the fringe of the problem and cannot wholly explain the phenomenon of governmental paralysis. It is doubtful if the administrative decline, already visible even in the hey-day of the Mughals,—could have been wholly averted or wholly arrested even if there was a succession of strong and able rulers after Aurangzeb. Their absence merely aggravates the issue or accelerated the decline. Similarly internal troubles and foreign invasions were both symptoms and hardly the cause of administrative decline. They merely served to accentuate the problem.

The root of the problem of administrative competence is not to be found in the phantom monarchy of the age, for the monarch alone did not man the administration. It is to be traced to the impact of complex socio-economic forces of the age on polity,—for administration is in a broad sense a social phenomenon. The real crux of the matter lay in the institution of the nobility itself, a reflex of West Asiatic and Indian socio-economic and political environments. Since the civil administration and the army were inextricably linked up with the peerage through the mansabdari system, the decadence of the peerage, constituting the upper layers of administrative and military personnel, naturally accelerated the process of administrative decline and military inefficiency. Theoretical structure apart, the practical working of the administrative system,
the manner and extent of the proper discharge of the functions and obligations of the state, socio-political and military, all depended entirely on that institutionalised personnel. The ruling class comprised the zamindars (or virtually hereditary local aristocracy) and the jagirdars (the lineal descendants of the old Turkish ıqtadars or muqti).

This, again, depended on certain administrative and economic problems. Administratively, it became linked up, from the time of Akbar, with the mansabdari system. The growing needs of conquest and consolidation in an expansive state from Akbar to Aurangzeb necessitated an inevitable increase in the numbers of mansabdars and jagirdars as instruments of war and government. Salary could either be paid in cash (naqd) or in jagir i.e., assignment on land or any other source like customs. The grant of a jagir on purely service tenure was either a reward for past service or a form of payment for present. It was personal, not heritable in theory, though sometimes it was so in practice. As a jagir was an imperium in imperio the state was justified in opposing it and preferred the cash payment. But owing to a general world-wide fall in the value of money, the cost of administration and the living index of the ruling class rose. So men preferred the jagir. Constituting an official class, depending on royal favour, theoretically open to all, but exclusive and selective in effect, the mansabdars and jagirdars formed an elite group, based on noble lineage.

Economically the fortunes of this official class rested on the jagirs. These two systems, the mansabdari and the jagirdari became the obverse and reverse of the same coin of the institution of the nobility, the warp and the woof of the administration. Notwithstanding the policy of agricultural development initiated by rulers like Sher Shah and Akbar in the sixteenth century, certain adverse circumstances in the seventeenth century combined to reduce the income from land revenue and increase the
oppression on the peasantry. This diminishing agricultural income could hardly be compensated by the development of industry and trade under the Pax-Mughalia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As agriculture was the basis of Indian economy the state could derive a stable revenue only from land i.e., a rise of agricultural production. Without it a rise in the needs of the official peerage led to a growing pressure on land and the producing class depending on land. Even with the expansion of the area under tillage there was a crisis in the jagirdari system towards the end of Jahangir’s reign. The scheduled quota of horsemen or horses to be maintained by a noble was not actually maintained. Shajahan’s rule fixed one-third of the quota and refixed the salaries of the mansabdars, which were, again, often in the arrears. The crisis was muffled but not averted. So widespread had the practice of granting jagirs become in the time of Aurangzeb that it was an acute problem to find enough land even in spite of expansion of the empire. Aurangzeb had to face a deficit in revenue. This situation, coupled with the fall in the purchasing power of the rupee, explains why there was a veritable land hunger, leading to an acute shortage of jagirs which increased with years. The amount of land was limited, the number of claimants unlimited. Jagirs yielded not their full value but only ‘half or third of’ it. In other words their paper value was higher than the actual value. Even grants of these were delayed inordinately.

The problem was well put in a nut-shell by Inayatullah, Aurangzeb’s Diwan-i-tan-o-khalsa: ‘The contingents of the officers who are daily passed in review before your Majesty are unlimited (in number) while the land available for granting as jagirs is limited (in area). How can a limited figure be made equal to an unlimited one?’ (Ahkam). Fundamentally, therefore, the root of the crisis lay in the inadequacy of production, agricultural or industrial, to cope with the growing needs of the growing numbers of the ruling class. As Satish Chandra observes:
the available social surplus was insufficient to defray the cost of administration, pay for wars of one type or another, and to give the ruling class a standard of life in keeping with its expectations.' The administration and the army alike suffered. With uncertain income from jagirs, mansabdars kept much less than their scheduled contingents, thereby contributing to military inefficiency and false musters, while many farmed out their jagirs to middlemen or preferred to have their salaries in cash.

Section B

EFFECTS OF ABEYANCE OF THE MONARCHY ON ADMINISTRATION

From Shah Alam I to Shah Alam II

The decline of the monarchy undoubtedly deprived the state of a controlling and eagle-eyed supervisory head. It bred negligence in all ranks, fatal not only for internal order but also for defence.

Bahadur Shah (1707-12): After Aurangzeb's death there was no person to arrest the inevitable process of decline. Bahadur Shah, then in his sixties, had neither the inclination or willingness nor the aptitude for administration. On account of his supreme indifference in all state matters, including administration and lack of necessary information about the government and happenings in the country, he was sarcastically nicknamed Shah-i-be-Khabr (the unheeding or heedless King). The sovereign's negligence was of course a source of great weakness. But it may be said that unlike his successors, he had the ability to select two able officers who partly and somehow compensated their master's negligence: Wazir Munim Khan, 'a very good man of business' and Hidayatullah
(Sadullah) Khan, *diwan-i-tan-o-khalsa*, then unequalled in capacity and diligence.

*Jahandar Shah* (1712-13) was even more negligent in administration matters than his father because of his pleasure-seeking. Hence administrative decline became more serious in the time of Jahandar than before. So his Wazir, Zulfiqar Khan, had to deal with a difficult task. When Delhi was under ‘the Lord of Misrule’, the price of oil and clarified butter rose very high owing to three illuminations in a month. The price of grain rose very high in Delhi (7 or 8 seers to a rupee). Grain merchants were punished but this did not reduce the prices and so the people became highly discontented. A boatload of passengers met their watery grave on the Jamuna to satisfy the idle curiosity of Lal Kunwar. All this throws light on the prevailing ideas of rule under this ruler.

*Farrukhswyar* (1713-19): The process of administrative decline continued during the reign of Farrukhswyar owing to the party conflicts on the one hand and the incapacity of the Sayyids or their agents on the other. Violation of rules of business became the order of the day. A soldier, without any training or taste for civil administration, Abdullah Wazir neglected administration and pursued pleasure, leaving all state affairs and ministerial functions to be discharged by his *diwan*, Ratan Chand of the *bania* caste, now elevated to the rank of 2000 with the title of Raja. A man of narrow ideas, motivated only by selfishness, he was given a free hand by his negligent master. But he abused his trust. He was haughty and avaricious, taking bribes not only for himself but also for his master, besides the customary, though illegal, fees for making appointments. Mir Jumla, authorised to use the emperor’s ‘word and seal’ as his own ‘word and seal’, issued appointment letters to the candidates directly without routeing them through the Wazir according to rule. Being less extortionate and more accessible to people and more business-like, he was preferred by office-seekers. So the
Wazir and his lieutenant alike suffered 'both in influence and in income'. Naturally, under Ratan Chand's advice Abdullah set aside the appointments initiated by Mir Jumla. Administrative efficiency suffered.

**Muhammad Shah** (1719-48): Even before Nadir's invasion (1739) all administration was gone. Pursuing pleasure the emperor left public administration to his ministers. He had not the energy or courage even to carry out a good ministerial advice. Qamaruddin Wazir could do nothing to improve matters during his quarter of a century ministry (1724-48). He was intelligent and foresighted but an indolent drunkard, whose wisdom lay in inaction and drift. With the king as well as the Wazir 'more dead than alive', administration went to rack and ruin. Financial bankruptcy and military impotence were the inevitable results.

**Ahmad Shah** (1748-54): Ignorant of administration and war, and immersed in pleasure, Ahmad Shah could hardly be expected to reform the administration. All public business was in the hands of his mother and eunuch Javid Khan, whose natural capacity was poor but who assured the emperor of due compliance with the regulations. The administration grew 'weak and degraded', 'the pillars of the state were daily shaken', and 'the emperor never enquired about the realm, the soldiery or the treasury,—the three foundations of an empire....'

The illiterate Queen-mother, derided as 'foolish' by the court historian, sought to assert herself in the court and acquire wealth. Aspiring to govern personally like Nur Jahan she daily used to discuss, behind a screen, at her porch, public matters with officers and passed final orders on petitions read out to her. But she did not select capable officers to rule. The soldiers were mutinous for arrears of pay. The sale proceeds of palace plates did not yield even two lakhs. Yet she spent two crores on her birthday celebration (1754). Apart from various titles heaped on her, she was created a *mansabdar* of 500,000.
while her vagabond brother was created a 6-hazari. The hereditary nobles felt insulted and refused to attend on the eunuch and were insulted in turn by him.

The decline in administration was unabated during the Wizarat of Safdar Jung (1748-53) who lacked the requisite initiative or wisdom to maintain the administration.

**Alamgir II (1754-59):** Alamgir II’s aspirations and achievements were poles apart. He lagged far behind his earlier namesake, in strength of character, abstemiousness as regards women, and contact with the soldiery. His family was large but the treasury was empty. His queens seized the income from the salt-marts and grain-markets near Delhi, then ‘the only sure source of revenue’ of the empire. His Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk, was also an incompetent administrator. To pay the promised subsidy of 40 lakhs to the Marathas and also the 3-year arrear salary of his own soldiers, the emperor’s artillery guards and servants, he exacted money from the family of Udham Bai and raised forced contributions from the Delhi people with the help of Nagar Mal, diwan-i-khalsa. As nothing could be collected from the powerful rich, the traders, artisans and the common people in the markets became the next target. Shops were closed on two occasions in protest, demonstrations were made before the powerless emperor. Only when the latter threatened a hunger strike till death the Wazir withdrew the demand. The Marathas could be satisfied by surrender of villages in khalsa and privy purse estates and in Saharanpur. The government turned bankrupt.

**Section C**

**FOREIGN INVASIONS**

As explained before, foreign invasions were not the cause but the symptom or effect of the decline of the empire. Rendered easy by internal factors they exposed its inner rottenness. In fact they accelerated the decadence of
the administration, gave a rude shock to the financial stability of the state on account of war expenditure, indemnity, successive cessions of territory, consequential loss of revenue, repeated plunder and drain of wealth, stupefied the king, nobles and the entire administrative personnel and also contributed to increasing military weakness. Under the shock of these foreign invasions, internal administration broke down completely. These not only shattered imperial prestige, but let loose predatory instincts even in the heart of the empire.

Section D
INTERNAL DISTURBANCES AND INSECURITY

A clear symptom of 'lack of governance' is visible in the frequent internal disturbances of various categories. Repeated civil wars for succession, rebellions of nobles against government, party conflicts, contributed to administrative decline. Deaths, assassinations or dismissals of experienced statesmen and administrators, generals and fighters deprived the state of competent administrative and military personnel, familiar with rules and regulations of state or art of war, which gradually fell into disuetude.

Such disturbances broke the bonds of social cohesion, dislocated the economy and corroded the habit of obedience to law and order, the essential foundation of peace, prosperity and progress in the country.

Not much need be said of the sickening tale of the frequent internal disorders and insecurity, except that these were a clear sign that the age of the 'Great Anarchy' was creeping in. A few examples would perhaps suffice. In the time of Bahadur Shah, a disturbance was created by Pap Rai, a freebooter of Warangal, who plundered it.
It took nine months' siege for the governor of the Deccan to curb him.

Owing to insolvency of the government and long-standing arrears of salary the imperial army and the palace soldiers mutinied or created scenes of constant lawlessness and military rowdiness throughout the reigns of Ahmad Shah and Alamgir II. In August 1756 the Wazir's artillery men closed the Delhi fort, cutting off supply of provisions and water. The son of the Delhi agent of Jagat Seth in Bengal and a Delhi sahukar promised to satisfy their claims through the mediation of Najib-ud-Daula.

There were two kinds of communal (or religious) disturbances,—Shia-Sunni, and Hindu-Muslim. To the former category belonged the widespread Khutba riot over the attempted use of the word 'wasi' after the name of Ali in the Khutba at the time of Bahadur Shah (1710). In different parts of the empire,—Lahore, Agra, Ahmadabad,—the Sunnis rose up in arms. The Khatib of Ahmadabad was killed. At Lahore religious discussions were held with the emperor who yielded.

To the second category belonged the holi riot at Ahmadabad (1713) and the serious Kashmir incident. At Ahmadabad a Hindu was permitted by the Muslim authorities to burn the holika in front of his house on the ground that a man was master of it. A Muslim killed a cow in front of his house in full view of the Hindus who rose and killed his son and others. The Muslims then indulged in reprisals and even sent a few complainants to Delhi, where they were imprisoned as the imperial officials were bribed by the Hindus. In Kashmir a fanatic, Mahbub Khan, demanded before the Qazi and the deputy governor on the strength of some fatwa, the imposition of ban on horse-riding and use of coat and turbans by Hindus. The officers were disinclined to oblige them on the ground of the state policy of expediency. Raising the cry of religion in danger, Mahbub Khan attacked the Hindus and then the 'partial' officials. The governor,
Mir Ahmad Khan, could not control the rebels who caused fire and havoc at Srinagar, and escaped. Mahbub ruled Kashmir for some months but later on he was killed. As this was attributed to the Shias in revenge for his past outrage, it caused a Sunni-Shia riot, which was suppressed by the new governor after the death of Farrukhsiyar.

Section E

REVENUE AND FINANCE

_Bahadur Shah_ (1707-12): It was in the field of revenue and financial administration that we get a very clear illustration of administrative decline. The _zabti_ system of revenue was introduced in the time of Akbar. Its main basis as well as its chief feature was the measurement of land. Its usefulness began to diminish in the time of Jahangir. The tempo of decline remained uninterrupted in the time of Shahjahan. In the beginning of Aurangzeb’s reign measurement of land was considered to be a means of punishment. The extent of oppression was increasing in matters of land revenue collection. The peasants used to abscond from the land, which fell out of cultivation. So land revenue also declined. To increase it many illegal demands were made. A vicious circle was set up. During the first eleven years of his reign Aurangzeb tried to reform the system. But the administration in Northern India virtually collapsed on account of the emperor's prolonged absence in the Deccan from 1681. Mughal government became bankrupt as a result of the continual wars there for 26 years. Administration was kept running with the revenue sent by Murshid Quli from Bengal.

After 1707 the later Mughal emperors had neither alertness nor ability for administration. Bahadur Shah was negligent. His two ministers, _Wazir_ Munim Khan and
diwan-i-tan-o-khalsa Hidayatullah, were of course both able. But where the emperor himself was at fault what will his ministers and officers do? Bahadur Shah aggravated the financial crisis in the empire by his reckless grants of jagirs, promotions, rewards and titles in order to win support for himself. The grant of the same title to more than a person was a grim sign of the approaching end of the rule of order in the empire. Even clerks, as Bhimsen sarcastically comments, got high mansabs. ‘With Khans in every house and Rais in every bazar’, Ikhlas Khan, the honest arz-i-mukarrar (Officer-in-charge of dealing with petitions), was highly sceptical of the wisdom of the policy. Apprehending that even the whole world (not to speak of India) would be insufficient for such excessive grants of land, he suggested an enquiry by the Wazir into the suitability of the awardees. This may be compared to the Quo Warranto of Edward III’s reign in England. But neither Munim Khan nor Ikhlas Khan wanted to bell the cat, and thereby court unpopularity by making such an enquiry. The responsibility fell on the shoulders of historian Saqi Mustaid Khan, author of Maasir-i-Alamgiri. ‘His duties were to receive all applications after the first order had passed upon them, and then institute an enquiry whether the new men were fit for the service, by what means or on what grounds office or promotion had been granted, whether the proposed rank was more than their position justified, or whether the promotion was given before the proper period. He had also to enquire into the grants for the support of holy and learned men.’ (Irvine). In brief, he had to check and certify all applications for the final imperial orders. It was a sound procedure. But a real enquiry caused delay. This led to the opposition of the two leading queens and some other near relations or influential persons. Their heavy pressure forced the royal signatures on the applications for grant of land without the preliminary enquiry. But such orders were irregular. So the emperor
instructed the mutasaddis (officers) of the revenue-department to ignore his signature, which thus lost its sanctity and importance. What a travesty of administration! The financial situation grew worse on account of such reckless grants and such half-hearted measures adopted.

A problem now arose, connected with the upkeep of the royal animals (Royal Transport Corps). According to rules the mansabdars had to pay for these out of the income of their jagirs. But this income had become uncertain. The jagirs were not fully cultivated. These were again in short supply. As Khafi Khan puts it pithily: "ek anār, sad bimār" (one pomegranate, a hundred patients). The mansabdars were unable to fulfil their obligations. As they could get only a small jagir, they were put to great distress and their representatives resigned their posts.

To remedy the situation Munim Khan suggested a reform. After the allotment of a jagir, the charges of feeding the animals were to be credited to the government and deducted from the emoluments, the mansabdars getting only the balance. So the cost of the upkeep of animals became a responsibility of the government. It meant relief to the mansabdars but proved to be an additional burden on the already impoverished treasury. But it is doubtful whether the over-generous emperor could retain the released land as khalsa and realise the maintenance cost of the animals from them. Hence with additional burdens on the exchequer the treasury become empty. The accumulated stores of 13 crores coined and uncoined gold and silver in Agra in 1707 were spent in five years. The salaries of wālā shāhis (royal artillery men) were in arrears for six years. Only the remittances from Bengal revenues, sent by Azim-us-Shan, helped to keep things going i.e. meet the expenditure of the government. Thus the administrative decline,—crisis of the jagirdari system and financial bankruptcy,—became very much more aggravated.
under Bahadur Shah. He left behind a more complex and difficult situation than what he had inherited.

Jahandar Shah (1712-13): The problem of revenue administration continued to be acute during the Wizarat of Zulfiquar. He endeavoured to reduce expenditure and solve the problem of jagirs. Exasperated at the situation, he issued orders that no sanad for land grants or increase of mansab would be given to any mansabdar so long as his due claim or right was not verified to be true after enquiry. He also insisted on compelling the mansabdars to maintain the scheduled quota of troops and due observance of the rules of musters. But none liked this strict adherence to rules and effort at economy. The royal favourites had their own nominee appointed as arz-i-mukarrar and so saved their selfish interests. The emperor remained as a helpless spectator.

Persons familiar with strict regulations and rules of business had either died or been dismissed. So these were violated. Bribery became a common practice now even among the Wazir and all other ministers. Zulfiquar once told the emperor: ‘We courtiers have got into the bad habit of taking bribes, and we cannot do any business unless we get a bribe’ (Khafi Khan). Revenue-farming (ijarah) had become the universal practice now in spite of Munim Khan’s reforms. The zabti system of Todar Mal had been completely given up. The condition of the peasants had become very bad. The government made direct dealings with the ‘revenue farmers, government officials and the middlemen’ who extracted as much as possible from the peasants according to their sweet will. This caused oppression of the peasants and worsened the condition of the people. Gradually the paper income and actual income of the jagirs became different, leading to the eventual collapse of the mansabdari system. It is, however, to be borne in mind that this was a legacy of the past. Zulfiquar was not alone responsible for this sorry state of affairs. Farming of revenue seems
to be the obvious remedy in a desperate financial situation.

Zulfiqar left the financial affairs in the hands of his Khatri ex-diwan and ‘all-powerful man of business’, Raja Sabhachand, who was detested by the people on account of his harshness, bribery, bad tongue and bad temper. The price of grain rose high at the capital. The efforts to check its spiralling up by repeatedly punishing the guilty merchants and officers did not prove successful.

Thus the measures adopted under Bahadur and Jahandar to reform the administration and effect economy proved ineffective. There was a crisis in the jagirdari system on account of uncertainty in the real revenue of jagirs and non-availability of land for distribution. This in turn adversely affected the mansabdari system and consequently the efficiency of the military system as well.

Farrukhsiyar (1713-19): The situation did not improve under Farrukhsiyar owing to his conflict with the Sayyids, party conflicts, as well as his intrigues, irritable temper, voluptuous character and consequent neglect of administration (Khafi Khan). Realising that the custom of revenue farming was ruinous to the state and the peasantry on the principle amānī ābadānī, ijāra Ujāra (direct management brings prosperity; farming out, ruin), the Great Mughals always preferred direct management by state officers, though the stress of circumstances made its full implementation difficult. Farming of jagirs, occasional in Aurangzeb’s time, had become universal during Jahandar’s reign. Farrukhsiyar rightly passed standing orders (July 1715), forbidding farming. But now the ruinous practice was in full swing. Even khalsa lands came to be farmed or leased out to the highest bidder, without any let or hindrance in spite of royal objections, by Ratan Chand, the diwan of the all-powerful Wazir. Ratan Chand’s supreme influence came to be felt in all departments, including the revenue and judicial departments. None dared oppose him. The-
diwan-i-tan and diwan-i-khalsa (respectively in charge of pay and crownlands) became ‘mere cyphers’. Further, Ratan Chand used to take from a newly appointed amil a contract or written lease and realise the money in advance from his banker. The revenue of the state declined but the Wazir’s profit correspondingly increased. This was used by the Turani, Mir Jumla, to prove Abdullah’s administrative incapacity. The income of the jagir lands also declined. The condition of the jagirdars and the mansabdars (specially the smaller ones) grew worse. They were unable to carry out the obligations of maintaining troops or to meet their expenditure. The paper income of jagirs was higher than their actual income. Several jagirdars complained to the emperor.

To allay their hardships, Lutfullah Khan, diwan-i-tan, began to grant cash stipends (of Rs. 50) in lieu of jagirs to mansabdars (up to ek hazari or commanders of 1000). But prices were high, the stipends were inadequate and were paid irregularly. The nobles, small or big, did not maintain their scheduled quota of horsemen and used to send false reports in conjunction with the subordinate staff.

All this indirectly encouraged the growth of a new social class,—of bankers, contractors and revenue agents (Satish Chandra). The older nobles felt that they were overshadowed by these new classes. Hence Khafi Khan complained that under Ratan Chand nobody except Bārhās and baniās found any favour and that the disgraced and distrusted nobles had to spend their lives in humiliation and discontent. Another contemporary, Khushhal Chand, while praising Ratan Chand’s financial ability, remarked that he substituted the principles of kingship by those of shop-keeping. In other words, so rampant was corruption that everything was put up to sale. Administration rapidly broke down.

As a counterpoise to this new class, the emperor appointed Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri diwan-i-tan-o-khalsa (and also absentee governor of Kashmir) in April.
1717. Abdullah was sore but Inayatullah agreed not to do anything without the Wazir's advice and consent. The latter also agreed to come to office every week (and not to be absent for months together), so that Ratan Chand would not have a free hand in administration. Inayatullah tried to return to the days of Aurangzeb, abolish revenue-farming, and to increase revenue. But in the corrupt atmosphere of the court nothing could be done. Disagreement, however, arose over the reimposition of the jiziyā and the diwan's efforts to reform the system of assignee-jagirs. The Hindus, eunuchs and Kashmiris had fraudulently or forcibly acquired rank and jagirs in excess of their merit, excluding others. This touched the profits of the persons as well as those of Ratan Chand. So Abdullah did not ratify the scheme.

Mūhammad Shāh (1719-48): During the forty years from Muhammad Shah to Alamgir II (1719-59) the problem of administrative decline was virtually the same,—increasing worthlessness of kings and Wazirs, narrow selfishness of nobles, accelerated dismemberment of the empire, mounting bankruptcy of the state and the lengthening shadow of lawlessness.

Military impotence and financial shortage increased on account of indolence and worthlessness of Muhammad Shah. In the absence of an awe-inspiring master or protector, every noble grabbed public revenue with impunity, every zamindar seized neighbouring lands and levied blackmail on highways and villages outside his jurisdiction. Finance became a matter of serious concern. The imperial treasury had been denuded by Nadir Shah. Owing to weakening of the central authority the provinces were attacked or became independent. Provincial governors withheld tribute. On account of the Maratha raids no revenue came from Bengal after 1746. The managers of khalsa lands withheld their due revenue. Thus the court had to face bankruptcy. The pay of the soldiers fell into arrears. No campaign against recalcitrant governors
or nobles, zamindars or brigands was possible. The emperor and his family faced poverty, distress and humiliation. To avert the impending starvation, Amir Khan, the favourite of Muhammad Shah, advised him to enforce the rule of escheat of property of dead nobles, and demanded from Wazir Qamaruddin the rent-roll of the jagirs of his deceased son, Badruddin, leaving a property of 12½ lakhs of rupees. The Wazir strongly protested.

As the court became increasingly bankrupt, powerful ministers and favourite begams entered into a mad scramble for occupying the best fertile jagirs, profitable townmarkets and other income-yielding sources. The yield from customs of Surat port, the 17th century milch cow of the empire, had ceased. But the grain markets near the capital used to yield much profit. The revenue of 25 lakhs a year from the Jamuna canal was appropriated by Safdar Jang.

Ahmad Shah (1748-54): By the middle of eighteenth century the Delhi 'empire' under the direct rule of the emperor became confined to a small circle round the capital extending from the upper Ganga-Jamuna doab in the east to Rohtak and Gurgaon districts in the west (cf. the phrase āz-Delhi-tā-Pālam). While some province had become independent and affluent, others came to be usurped by the Afghans, the Marathas and Jats. It was only from Bengal that some revenue still came. The spectre of bankruptcy loomed large before the imperial government.

Usually the nearest, the best, most peaceful and easiest to control, villages within the above-mentioned boundaries were earmarked for crownlands and privy purse estates (Sarf-i-khās). Their income was utilised to meet the pay of household servants, palace guards (particularly Delhi garrison artillery), and the cost of food and clothing of the emperor and his family and state pensioners (children and widows of past emperors). But during the
reign of Ahmad Shah, powerful amirs like Javid Khan, Safdar Jang and Imad-ul-Mulk began to misappropriate the revenue from these places. The emperor got only the crumbs. They began to fleece the peasants and merchants. The emperor, his family, personal servants and guards,—all were on the verge of starvation. Every amir clung to his present selfish interests and never thought of the country or even of their own future. Except three nobles,—Javid Khan, Safdar Jang and Salabat Khan (Zulfiqar Jang Mir Bakhshi), all other amirs of the court or of the capital had their regular income exhausted. After spending their cash reserves they dispensed with their servants and soldiers and fell into penury. The military strength of the empire was totally destroyed. The few remaining watchmen and artillery men had heavy arrears of pay.

The salaries of soldiers now fell into arrears for 14, 18 or 36 months. Stung by starvation they mutinied and created disturbances every month. Shakir Khan of Panipat says that the salaries were paid from the sale proceeds of the goods of the imperial stores and karkhanas. The Central Asian (Vilayeti) soldiers and the palace troops of the emperor snatched away articles from wazirs, amirs, sahus, merchants, artisans and shops and sold them. The nobles had only the clothes and earthen utensils left to them.

Under Alamgir M (1754-59), as the court historian bewails, ‘the Wazir ruined the whole realm’. An incompetent coward, Imad, could not dare subdue and govern his own distant jagirs. So he seized the nearby crownlands and privy purse estates yielding fairly regular revenue which could be easily collected. Some crownlands in Delhi and other provinces had already been lost to Najib-ud-Daula, the Jats and Madho Singh of Jaipur. Thus the salaries of the 12,000 strong Badakhshis (Sindagh), constituting the chief armed support of the emperor, amounting to eight lakhs of rupees, fell into arrears. The
Wazir permitted them to plunder houses and extract ransom from the rich citizens of Delhi. These Central Asiatic mercenaries evaded musters and accounts alike. The Maratha allies of Imad also pressed for payment. So the Wazir alienated some privy purse estates to the Badakhshis and the Marathas, ignoring the repeated appeals of the emperor. No relief was, however, given to other sections of the army (artillery, Awadhia and Baksariya musketeers, the emperor's personal attendants and officials), who not only struck work but also indulged in riots in the fort and the city. The 'Shahan Shah' and his family was on the brink of starvation, there being no money for the meals of the emperor and of the harem ladies.

Section F

JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

There were three separate judicial institutions in the time of the Mughal emperors: (i) Court of Religious Law under the Qazi; (ii) Court of Common Law under the provincial governor, local officers, tribal heads or caste panchayets; (iii) Court of political offences under the emperor or his representative.

(i) In the Central government there was the Qazi-ul-Quzzat or chief Qazi. In the province there was the Qazi. All matters relating to religion (e.g., family disputes, succession, waqf, marriage etc.) used to come to them. The law could be interpreted not by the Qazi but by the mufti (jurist), learned in fatawa or precedents (nazir).

(ii) The Courts of common law or secular courts were under the representatives of the emperor, e.g., provincial governor or other local officers like kotwal or s.nonjdar. For the Hindu villagers there were courts under a Brahman Pandit or the headman of the panchayet. They were not under the Qazi and used to administer justice according to customary law.
(iii) The justice administered by the emperor or his representative in political cases was called Urf. This included offences against the state, law and order, rebellion, riots, theft, dacoity, murder etc.

The Mughal emperor was the fountain of justice, as well as a court of first instance. Again he also heard appeals in the open court.

Besides this there was a Sadr-us-Sudur in the centre to distribute charity or help the indigent learned men or students in the empire. Their duty was to cultivate Islamic legal studies, spread knowledge and true religion. Sometimes they used to discharge the functions of the Qazi. They used to grant land to deserving persons in the interest of religion and also to resume land from undeserving ones. According to Ghulam Husain, it was one of the principal duties of the Sadr to test the ability and character of the Qazi. In the eighteenth century this office became a source of oppression and cruelty. They misappropriated the property of thousands of innocent people.

The judicial system completely broke down by the time of Farrukhsiyar. The posts of Qazi and Sadr were openly sold or leased out as in other posts. In deep disappointment Ghulam Husain writes: ‘......... the people skilled in law, and in matters of distributive justice, entirely disappeared from the land; nor was anything else thought of, but how to bring money to hand by any means whatever’, and again, ‘the Sun of Justice and Equity, that had already been verging from the meridian, inclined downwards, degree by degree, and at last entirely set in the Occident of ignorance, imprudence, violence, and civil wars’.

The Qazi’s duty was to maintain law impartially and ruthlessly. He was remunerated by pay and jagir. He fell down in estimation of others if he took money for his work or bribes. But now even in the post of the Qazi lease and underlease became rampant. Such Qazis, irreligious, wholly ignorant of Islamic rules, apostate and worse than atheists, used to oppress the Muslims in various
ways and extort money from them. The common people believed that the soul of the deceased person would not leave the house until the Qazi's representative came. The impure master of the house was ostracised. To collect the fee of the Qazi he had to beg on the street or borrow money or even be penniless after selling utensils. It was necessary to pay the fee to the Qazi in advance at the time of circumcision of boys or marriage of girls for getting these done. The householder was ostracised for his inability.

The poor, unprotected and weak persons could not go to meet the minister or the emperor on every matter at all hours. To relieve their distress the post of darogha-i-adalat was created. He had to be in attendance at the court from daybreak at 4 A.M. to 3 P.M. in the afternoon and hear cases irrespective of persons. An easy case was compromised. If it was a difficult one a written plaint of the events (surat-i-hāl), along with witnesses, prosecution, defence was brought twice a week before the minister or emperor. In the province such a case was disposed of by the subahdar or faujdar.

But now the work of justice came to be reduced to a lucrative job and a travesty. Formerly even honest persons used to hesitate to join this post. But now there was an open scramble for getting the post on account of the opportunities of taking bribes. To the government also it was a matter of favour or choice. The salaries of the darogha and others were now paid from fines and incidental income. So it was not at all difficult for them to amass huge money. None looked into the matter.

It was the duty of the Muhtasib (Censor of Public Morals) to shape the life of the people in conformity to the prescriptions of Islamic law, e.g., controlling use of wine or intoxicating drugs, suppress adultery etc. Ghulam Husain says that it was also their duty to see that the roadside romeos did not insult the travelling ladies and to prevent brawls by drunkards or incidental injuries and
insult. In those days the muhtasib also used to regulate the prices of grain and other quarrels between the buyers and sellers, and examine the accuracy of weights and measures in some provinces, though formerly and even then this was a part of the kotwal's duty at some places.

There was wilful oppression. They used to extract illegal dues; prices varied in the same town and in the same market; weights and measures were tampered with. On the streets there was quite a crowd in the drinking houses of intemperate men, half-naked, drunken servants, barbers, khalāsīs and sepoys, especially Englishmen. Gentlemen going on their errands hesitated to pass through the markets or move on the roads in order to avoid being embroiled in these disturbances and tried to steer clear of trouble by invoking the name of God when going out.

Section G

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The age from Akbar to Aurangzeb was one of expansion and consolidation of the Mughal empire. The post-Aurangzeb period or the eighteenth century was the age of contraction and division. Akbar divided the empire at first into 12 and later on into 15 subahs or provinces. Under Shahjahn their number increased to 22. Though the empire reached its maximum limits in the time of Aurangzeb, the provinces numbered only 21.

The provincial administration was a replica and a miniature of the central government. In place of the emperor there was the subahdar or governor. Besides, there were Diwan, Bakhshi, Sadr, Qazi, and spies as at the centre. Of course the subahdar used to play the padishak in his own province. But he could not get suitable opportunities to become completely independent owing to the rivalry between the subahdar and the diwan and the existence of numerous limitations on the provincial governors in the age of the Great Mughals.
But in the eighteenth century on account of the weakness of monarchy the situation was completely changed. Even the first half of this century witnessed multiple division and contraction of the empire. Many parts of it were lost as a result of the invasions of Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Marathas. Again, independent dynasties were established in several provinces. Formerly the subahdars used to govern the provinces for a limited term only. But now a few ambitious and able subahdars ruled their respective charges for several years. Though outwardly professing legal subordination to the weak empire, they founded their own dynasties,—Murshid Quli Jafar Khan in Bengal (1713-27), Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah in the Deccan (1713, 1725-48), Saadat Khan in Awadh (1723-39), and Saif-ud-Daula I Dilir Jung (1713-26) in the Punjab. The Marathas occupied Malwa and Gujrat in 1741 and 1753 respectively.

A few founder-viceroy accomplished beneficial work as administrators. They were firm and able, maintained law and order at home and not only saved the people from thieves and foreign invaders but also from the illegal and unjust demands of the lower officers. Murshid Quli was so impartial in his justice and so firm and strict in enforcement of his orders that, in the words of Salimullah, none dared to commit any oppression. Nizam Asaf Jah abolished the illegal ziladari tax, extracted from the zamindar and the peasant in Khandesh, Balaghat and other areas. Besides, he also enforced the imperial prohibitions regarding abwabs. Zakaria Khan used to keep almost family relation with the artisans and other people in the Punjab. He requested Nadir Shah to release the captured Indians who were being carried as slave labourers to Iran. Firm, just and alert he used to protect the people from oppression and internal brigandage. The subjects used to love him and looked upon him as an object of veneration.

At the terrible shock of Nadir Shah’s invasion, provincial administration, too, utterly broke down. The people's
minds were completely bereft of fear owing to the infamy of the government. So in the provinces without a strong governor peace was entirely gone. The predatory instinct that was held in check by Mughal administration and dignity raised its ugly head in the inner-most areas in the empire,—the Jats and the Sikhs captured many villages (1740) in Sirhind; the money brought by the Peshwa's agent was plundered at Sassaram (1743); Ali Muhammad Ruhela attacked the empire by plundering and increasing his power.

Thus public peace disappeared in provinces without a strong subahdar. But law and order could not be maintained in the absence of an adequate army under the emperor.

Section H
ESPIONAGE SYSTEM

It is generally held that four categories of persons were appointed in the espionage system of the Mughals,—waqia-navis or reporters, swanih-nigar, khufia-navis (secret reporters) and harkara (oral reporters). But it is not generally known that this fourfold division was not in existence at first, but grew up slowly and indicated a developed system. Spies used to move about in the centre, provinces, towns, cities, courts, and almost everywhere. The reports of the different spies were compared in order to test their accuracy. Again there were super-spies over the spies. The waqia-navis used to work publicly. But in cases of collusion between them and the provincial governors, a swanih-nigar was appointed to verify the truth of the report of the waqia-navis. If the swanih-nigar was also corrupt, a khufia-navis was appointed very secretly. Even local officers were not aware of their existence. All of them used to send written reports. The harkara, generally carrying oral news, sometimes used to submit written
reports. The system by which the reports of spies were sent was called *dāk-chowki*, and there were relays of horses and carriers at fixed stations. The reports of the provinces were brought duly sealed to the *daroga-i-dak-chowki*, who used to send these unopened to the Wazir for the emperor.

In the first half of the eighteenth century the efficiency of this department was at a very low ebb. Ghulam Husain says that these posts then hardly existed at all. In the villages, cities and big towns, the servants, favourites, dependents, spies or agents of the zamindars, used to get the favours or posts from the government and commit acts of oppression or collect illegal dues without any fear. There was none to protest or punish. The surprised reader will ask only one question. What kind of administration is this?

*Section I*

**POLICE**

The police system in the Mughal age may be considered in three aspects,—village police, town police and district police. For local crimes the local officers were held responsible. In the villages the Mughals had no policing arrangement. It was left to the local village institution. The *chowkidar* as its servant used to discharge this function in return of land or a part of the crops. The Mughal government accepted no responsibility in the matter. It was the villagers who used to protect their own lives and property and were responsible for it.

In the town the *kotwal* was the police officer. It was he who used to regulate the life of the citizens from birth to death. Among the numerous duties which he used to discharge were keeping statistics of birth, death and marriages and lists of houses, enforcing curfew order, regulating prostitution and the restrictions in the use of
intoxicating liquor and drugs, espionage, unemployment, regulating markets, preventing theft and controlling ferries.

The *faujdar* was in charge of the *sarkar* or district. He ranked next to the *subahdar*. He had to subdue recalcitrant zamindars and robbers and thieves. He employed the army at the time of collection of revenue. Ghulam Husain says that in cases of necessity the neighbouring *faujdars* too used to help him and the *nazims* (*subahdars*) of different provinces used to act in unison, even without central order. The capital of Bengal then was Jahangirnagar or Dacca. There were 10 *sarkars* in Bengal—Islamabad-Chatgaon, Sylhet, Rangpur, Rangamati, Jalalgarh-Purnea, Rajmahal-Akbnagar, Rajshahi, Burdwan, Midnapur, Bakhshibandar-Hughli. The capital of Bihar was Patna-Azimabad. It had 8 *sarkars*—Shahabad, Rohtas, Monghyr, Bihar, Champaran, Saran, Tirhut and Hajipur.

After 1765 owing to the increase in the authority of the *zamindars*, the *faujdars* feared to issue orders or protect the people from their oppression. The *faujdar* used to appropriate the stolen property if recovered. Ghulam Husain says that now the *faujdars* did not do anything except increasing oppression as they had good relations with Muhammad Reza Khan. He further says that the English were not at all eager for the welfare of the Indians, and that it was an extremely difficult task for the common people to have an interview with Governor Hastings.