Chapter 7

Conclusion
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A struggle for throne was in the tradition of the Chaghtai Turks in India ever since the time of Humayun. Sometime, it was a fratricidal war, sometimes it partook of the nature of a rebellion of a son against the father. Whatever the form, the nobles played an important, sometimes a decisive role in such civil war.

Aurangzeb’s death on 3 March 1707 at Ahmadnagar in Deccan signalled the outbreak of a fratricidal war among his three surviving sons, Prince Muazzam, Muhammad Azam and Kam Bakhsh. The eldest brother got the better of the two and defeated and killed Muhammad Azam at Jajau (1707) and Kam Bakhsh (near Hyderabad 1709). Muazzam assumed the title of Bahadur Shah I. An elderly man (over 63 years of age) the new emperor was not fitted for the role of an active leader, “He was the last emperor”, writes Sidney Owen, “of whom anything favourable can be said. He was free from some of the worst defects or vices of his successors, whom he did excel in several respect. Unlike all of them he was accustomed to an active camp life. He freely exercised his own discretion in public affairs, selecting his own Wazir, a fairly able and experienced man of business and other ministers and governor. He
frequently moved out of Delhi to conduct military campaigns himself, which very few of his successors actually did. Khafi Khan has praised his generosity, good nature and sense of forgiveness. He could not say ‘no’ to anybody. In fact he was extremely soft by nature. His character was complete contrast to that of his father but it somewhat resembled Dara’s.

Whether it was the outcome of statesmanship or weakness, the new emperor favoured a pacific policy. The Maratha Sardar, Shahu who had been in Mughal captivity since 1689 was released and allowed to return to Maharashtra. Peace was made with the Rajput chiefs confirming them in their states. However, Bahadur Shah was forced to take action against the Sikhs whose new leader Banda Bahadur had become a terror for government and the Muslims in the Punjab. Banda was defeated at Lohgarh and the Mughal forces reoccupied Sirhind in January 1711; however the Sikhs were neither conciliated nor crushed.

It was during the reign of Bahadur Shah that the Wazir became the most powerful minister and the most important man in the state. Munim Khan who held the office had great influence over the royal mind and his counsels had more weight with him than that of other ministers. His powers and functions contended beyond the jurisdiction of the revenue department, he took active part in all the campaigns fought in this period.
He overshadowed the Wakil-i-Mutlaq, Asad Khan and drove him into the background.

Though Bahadur Shah gave the impression of being a weak and feeble king, he kept the nobles under restraint and did not allow the reins of government to slip from his grasp. With courage and foresight he successfully resisted the plans of Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan to concentrate all executive powers in their own family. Bahadur Shah by utilizing the services of the princes, maintained the dignity and strength of the monarchy and shielded it from encroachment by ambitious ministers.

Preceding chapters throw ample light on the broad policies adopted by Bahadur Shah which seemed to be a gradual departure from the policies of Aurangzeb. This departure was fairly marked in the sphere of the relations with the Marathas and to a smaller extent with the Rajputs. But in the case of the Sikhs, for special reasons, the old policy of repression was pursued with renewed vigour.

A cautious and hesitating departure from Aurangzeb’s policies is visible in the sphere of religious policy and in the dealings of the emperor with his Hindu subjects. Thus the ban on drinking and on signing and
dancing in the royal court continued\(^1\), though Bahadur Shah was far from sharing his father’s orthodox outlook. He was a sufi – like his Wazir, Munim Khan – and incurred the displeasure of the orthodox circle by assuming the title ‘Saiyid’. His attempt to have the word ‘Wasi’ or heir inserted in the Friday Khutbah after the name of ‘Ali’ led to widespread rioting and had to be abandoned.\(^2\) However, it led to a definite breach between the Emperor and the orthodox section.

As far as the Bahadur Shah’s dealings with the Hindus are concerned, we do not hear of the destruction of any temples or forced conversions in his reign. But the ban on the use of Palkis and Arabi and Iraqi horses, *raths* and elephants by Hindu was reaffirmed, and they were also directed not to wear pearls in their ears, and to trim their beards.\(^3\) He is also said to have issued an order that Hindus were not to be employed as news reporters in the provinces. *Jizyah*, while not formally abolished seems to have fallen gradually into disuse.\(^4\) Thus, distrust of the Hindus, engendered by political conflict and other factors had not yet been given up, but the orthodox approach was being gradually modified. However,

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\(^1\) Bahadur Shah Nama, 182, 443. According to Manucci (iii, p. 254) Bahadur Shah indulged in wine drinking himself.

\(^2\) Muntakhab ut Lubab, 603, 661, 681.

\(^3\) Akbarat, 18 Nov. 1707.

\(^4\) It was levied at the time of the first Rajput war (khafi Khan, 606), but according to Warid (p. 9, in the reign of Bahadur Shah, *Jizyah* had fallen into disuse. According to Vir Vinod (p. 395) towards the close of his reign, Bahadur Shah had contemplated abolishing the *jizyah* but died before he could do so.
Jizyah continued to be levied irregularly in different parts of the empire till the end of Bahadur Shah's reign.

Warid merely says that in the reign of Bahadur Shah the orders about Jizyah had become old i.e. feeble signifying that they were not enforced strictly.⁵

However, the advantages that might have been secured by the adoption of a more liberal and conciliatory policy were off-set by a deterioration in the sphere of administration and especially of finances. Bahadur shah possessed neither the inclination nor the aptitude for administrative affairs. Acceding to Khafi Khan, 'such negligence was shown in the protection of the state and in the government and management of the country, that witty, sarcastic people found the date of his accession in the words shah-i-bi-khabr.⁶ However, Bahadur Shah's neglect of administration was partly made good by Munim Khan, the Wazir who was a very good man of business; and by Hidayatullah Khan (Sadullah Khan), the diwan-i-tam and Khalisah who 'in ability and capacity for hard work had no equal in his time'.⁷

Bahadur Shah was most liberal to all, including the ulama, in the grant of lands. He allotted half of chakla Bareilly, which was in Khalisah,
as madad-i-maash. When the mutsaddis objected he observed, like Aurangzeb earlier, that the world was wide i.e. large enough. The process of alienation of Khalisah lands continued apace under his successors.\(^8\) The jagir problem had become progressively more acute till it had reached the proportions of a crisis in the time of Aurangzeb. Bahadur shah on his accession made it worse by a reckless grant of jagir and promotions and rewards to all and sundry so much so that according to Bhimsen even clerks secured high mansabs.\(^9\) The state of affairs alarmed Ikhlas Khan, the arz-i-mukarrar who was noted for his ability and integrity and for the strictness in revenue matter and in the taking of accounts. He represented to the Wazir that the generosity of the king was against prudence and the interests of the state, and that leave alone India, the whole world would not suffice to provide jagirs to all those whom be favoured. He suggested that the Wazir should institute an enquiry into the suitability of the appointees and whether the proposed rank or promotion or reward was not more than they deserved. But neither Munim Khan or Ikhlas Khan were prepared to face the unpopularity of conducting such an enquiry themselves. Ultimately, Muhammad Saqi Mustad Khan, the historian was entrusted with the job. Before an application was forwarded by the arz-i-mukarrar and the wazir to the emperor, it had to be checked

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8. Tarikh-i-Hindi, 425.
and certified by Mustaid Khan. But this entailed in ordinate delay. The two leading queens, Mihr Parwar and Amatul Habib, some other persons close to the emperor started the practice of securing his signature on their applications without referring them to Mustaid Khan for enquiry and approval. But little heed was often paid to such (irregular) grants (by the revenue department). The king instructed the mutsaddis to do what they thought was proper, without heeding his signature which in consequence, lost its value.¹⁰

We do not know to what extent Munim Khan Ikhlas Khan and Mustaid Khan could place a check upon the reckless grants of Bahadur shah. But the growing crisis of the jagirdari system could scarcely be checked by these half-hearted measures. At length, Munim Khan instituted a reform. He passed orders that after a mansabdar had been allotted a jagir, the charges for feeding the animals should be deducted from his total emoluments, and the balance paid to him as tankhwah.¹¹

The reforms undoubtedly constituted a substantial relief to the mansabdars, but it increased proportionately the responsibility of the central government keeping in mind the liberality of Bahadur Shah in the matter of granting jagirs, it may be doubted whether he was able to keep

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¹¹ Literally, ‘salary’, but this salary could be paid in cash (naqadi) or by means of a jagir (tankhwah jagir).
in *khalisah* the lands thus deducted from the jagirs of the nobles, and to realize from them the funds for the upkeep of the royal animals. Thus, the burden on the state exchequer probably grew.

In any case, there can be little doubt about the serious financial situation in the time of Bahadur Shah. We are told that when Bahadur Shah ascended the throne, he found 13 crores coined and uncoined gold and silver in the Agra fort. By the end of the reign, all this had been spent! Khafi Khan remarks: "The income of the empire during his reign was insufficient to meet the expenses, and consequently there was great parsimony shown in the government establishments, but specially in the royal household, so much so that money was received everyday from the treasury of Prince Azim-us-shan to keep things going."\(^{12}\) The artillery men in the royal retinue (*wala shahis*) complained that their salary was six years in arrears.\(^{13}\)

Thus, the reign of Bahadur Shah witnessed a sharp deterioration in the financial situation and a further accentuation of the crisis of the *jagirdari* system, although Munim Khan and a few others sought to check the worst abuses and to prevent a reckless growth in the ranks and numbers of the mansabdars and other grantees.

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However, under him the monarchy faced no crisis; it commanded respect and inspired awe as in the past. With his death on 27 February 1712 at Lahore, however began the long and bitter struggle for the Wazarat which became the keynote of Mughal History in subsequent years. His death was immediately followed by a new war of succession among the princes even before his body was buried.\footnote{When the war of succession was over, his dead body was brought to Delhi and buried in the courtyard of the Alamgir mosque near the tomb of Khwaja Qutubuddin Kaki.}