Chapter 4

Deccan Problems
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DECCAN PROBLEM

After ascending the throne, Bahadur Shah (Shah Alam) was compelled to reckon with the problems which Aurangzeb had bequeathed to his successors. The general problem of maintaining law and order especially in the Deccan where the Marathas posed a serious challenge to the Mughals was one of the many problems facing the Empire.

In facing these problems, Bahadur Shah inclined towards a policy of cautious compromise and conciliation, both on account of his character and general outlook, and the concrete situation with which he was faced.

The political views of Bahadur Shah during the period of his princethood are rather obscure. He held the post of Viceroy of the Deccan several times, but his policy and general conduct of affairs were considered weak and unsatisfactory by the Emperor who, for this reason, did not permit him to hold independent charge of the Deccan for any length of time.¹ During the final operations against Bijapur and Golkonda, he was accused of colluding and conspiring with Abul Hasan, the king of Golkunda, and was placed in confinement by the Emperor.

¹ Bahadur Shah was the Viceroy of the Deccan after the removal of Shaishta Khan from 1667-42 and from 1678-80 (Maasir-i-Alamgiri, 45, 57). Throughout this period, the actual command of the field armies was entrusted to some prominent noble appointed directly by Aurangzeb.
According to Khafi Khan who wrote about forty years after these events, the prince considered the invasion of Golkonda a breach of faith and desired that 'war and peace should be dependent on his approval as heir apparent and that so far as possible he should bind Abul Hasan to his interest'. For these reasons he had wanted to use his influence with the Emperor to obtain a pardon for Abul Hasan. ²

At the time of Bahadur Shah accession the Deccan problem was complicated by the presence of a royal competitor in the Deccan, Kam Bakhsh who had struck coins and had khutba read in his name, thus proclaiming his independence. Aurangzeb had over-run the Deccan plateau and extinguished the independent states existing there. In order to meet the two-fold problem of establishing a sound administrative system in those parts, and of overcoming the Maratha opposition, Aurangzeb had spent the last 26 years of his life in Deccan but he could achieve only limited success. With his death, the problem became all the more complicated and finding a solution was difficult. The nobles were already restive at their prolonged stay in the Deccan away from northern India which the large majority of them regarded as their home. A new monarch was not likely to have sufficient authority to compel them to prolong their stay in the Deccan much longer. Besides, continued concentration on the

²  Muntakhab ut Lubab, 331-32.
Deccan was liable to have serious repercussions on northern India, the resources of which formed the mainstay of the Mughal Empire.

The scheme for the partition of Empire ascribed to Aurangzeb was apparently aimed at providing a solution to the twin problems for securing the extension of the Mughal Empire to the entire country and, at the same time, setting up in the Deccan a local administration strong enough to counter the Maratha depredations.

On the eve of the battle of Jaju, Bahadur Shah had offered to abide by the provisions of the will of Aurangzeb. He now made a similar offer to Kam Bakhsh. ‘Our father entrusted to you the Subah of Bijapur’ he wrote to Kam Bakhsh in a letter sent through Hafiz Ahmad Mufti alias Matbar Khan. ‘We now relinquish to you the two subah of Bijapur and Haiderabad with all subjects and belongings, upon the condition according to the old rules of the Dakhin, that the coins shall be struck and the Khutba read in our name. The tribute which has hitherto been paid by the governors of the two provinces we remit. You should do justice to the people, punish the disobedient, and expel the robbers and oppressors from that area.’

It is not easy to decide if Bahadur Shah was sincere in his offer. He may have hoped that the old kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda, united

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under a Timurid prince, would be able to maintain internal law and order and at the same time, provide an effective check to the Marathas.⁴

Such a kingdom would also not conflict with the principle of an all India Timurid monarchy. But the scheme could not be given a trial at all, for Kam Bakhsh scornfully rejected Bahadur Shah’s offer. This enabled the latter to cast on the head of Kam Bakhsh the onus of shedding the blood of innocent Muslims.⁵

If Kam Bakhsh had taken effective possession of all the important forts and fortresses in the provinces of Bijapur and Golkonda, secured the support and confidence of his nobles and reached some kind of an understanding with the Marathas he would have posed a serious threat to Bahadur Shah. Kam Bakhsh did make approaches towards the Marathas, but with little success. He failed to bring the Karnatak under his control due to the opposition of Daud Khan, the deputy of Zulfiqar Khan. In the north, the commandant of Golkonda, Nazr Beg Khan, who was in touch with Bahadur Shah, refused to submit to him.⁶ Most of the other nobles also sought to reinsurance themselves by entering into secret correspondence with Bahadur Shah. Matters were made worse by Kam Bakhsh’s

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⁴ Cf. the view of JDB Gribble (History fo the Deccan, 1898, ii, 337).
⁵ Bahadurshah Nama, 385.
⁶ Bahadur Shah had made various attempts to retain Haiderabad by granting concessions to the Governor, Rustam Dil Khan, Bahadur Shah Nama, 130; On 7 April, the subahdari of the Deccan was offered to Azim ush Shan, Bahadur Shah Nama, 257. As no reply had been received from Kan Bakhah till then, this suggests that Bahadur Shah was either nor sincere about his offer, or felt confident that Kam Bakhsh would reject it.
suspicious bent of mind which led him to unjustly entertain doubts about
the loyalty of Taqarrub Khan, the *Mir Bakhshi* and one of his most
energetic officers. Hence, he imprisoned Taqarrub Khan and executed
him along with a number of his adherents.\(^7\)

The result of all these was that the officers and men of Kam
Bakhsh deserted him in large numbers as Bahadur Shah approached near,
till Kam Baksh was left with only a small disprinted following. Deeming
flight to be dishonourable, he put up a desperate but futile resistance and
died fighting on the battlefield (13 January 1709). In this way, the civil
war which had kept parts of the country in an unsettled state for two years,
finally ended with the victory of Bahadur Shah who now ruled over one
of the most extensive empires ever ruled by an Indian king. The victory
of Bahadur Shah strengthened the idea of all India monarchy, and implied
the defeat, for the time being, of the forces of regional separatism. The
idea of the political unity of the country remained one of the cardinal
political beliefs in the country, and effected, in some degree or the other,
all political movements which developed in the country during the
eighteenth century. For instance, it found expression, in the continued
acceptance of the Mughal king as the Emperor of India even when all
power and glory had departed from him.

\(^7\) *Muntakhab ut Lubab*, 605-21.
Bahadur Shah had next to make suitable arrangements for the administration of the Deccan. At first, the post of the Viceroy of the six subahs of Deccan was offered to prince Azim ush Shan, who had been gradually gaining favour with him. However, Azim ush Shan preferred the charge of the eastern provinces – Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Allahabad, some of which he had governed during Aurangzeb’s lifetime. The post was therefore conferred upon Zulfiqar Khan. He was granted full authority in all the revenue and administrative matters pertaining to the Deccan, and allowed to remain at the court and to combine his new appointment with his previous post of mir bakhshi. His old associate and protégé, Daud Khan Panni was made his deputy in the Deccan and granted the mansab of 7,000/5,000 and the governorship of Bijapur, Berar and Aurangabad.

By virtue of holding two such important posts as those of the Mir Bakhshi and the (absentee) viceroy of the Deccan, Zulfiqare Khan became one of the most powerful nobles in the empire. Prior to this, the Mughal Emperors had never permitted one person to hold two such posts, whatever may have been the exigencies of the situation. Moreover Zulfiqar Khan was not prepared to tolerate any interference in the revenue or any other matter pertaining to the Deccan. It appears that

Munim Khan was opposed to the grant of such wide powers to Zulfiqar Khan. He put forward the argument that the province of Burhanpur (Khandesh) and half of Berar generally known as Pain-Ghat, did not form a part of the Deccan, because Khandesh had been a part of the independent kingdom of the Farukis, and Pain-Ghat had been annexed by Akbar. He wanted to include these subahs in the provinces dependent on Delhi, and to vest the authority over the political and revenue affairs, and the appointment, dismissal and transfer of officers in those areas in the hands of his eldest son, Mahabat Khan, who held the post of the third bakhshi. This caused bitterness between Munim Khan and Zulfiqar Khan, and the dispute reached such heights that it became the common talk of the camp. As Bahadur Shah disliked taking decisions in matters involving disputes between nobles, the prevailing situation apparently continued. 

Thus Zulfiqar Khan remained the viceroy of the Deccan with sole authority over its affairs.

There can be little doubt that the delegation of larger powers to the Viceroy of the Deccan, or to his deputy was an administrative necessity. But in the background of the growing feebleness of the central government, and the persistence of strong separatist tendencies in the Deccan, this served to stroke the fires of ambition in the breasts of

powerful nobles who were already casting covetous eyes on the Deccan. Along with the posts of wazir and mirbakhshi, the post of the Viceroy of the Deccan became one of the chief prizes in the struggle between parties and factions at the court.

The big test of the new viceroy's authority and influence was his ability to secure a settlement of the Maratha question along lines forced by him. But here he found it much more difficult to have his own way. After the defeat of Kam Bakhsh, in May 1709 Zulfiqar Khan introduced Shahi's Wakil Gangadhar Prahlad to the Emperor.

He presented an application for the grant of the Chauth and Sardeshmukhi for the six subahs of the Deccan on condition of restoring prosperity to ruined land. At the same time, Munim Khan presented Yadukesh the wakil of Tara-Bai, praying for a farman in the name of her son, Shivaji II. She asked only for sardeshmukhi without any reference to chauth, and also offered to suppress other insurgents and to restore order in the country. A great contention upon the matter arose between the two ministers. In the end, Bahadur Shah, who was unwilling to displease either side, ordered that sanads for sardeshmukhi be given in compliance with the requests of both Munim Khan and Zulfiqar Khan.¹¹ In other

¹¹. Muntakhab ut Lubab, 627, 783; Tarikh-I Ibrahimii, Elliot, viii, 259; Maasir ul Umara, ii, 351 says that Bahadur Shah granted 10 percent as Sardeshmukhi out of the total collections of (only the five) subahs of Aurangabad, Khandesh, Berer, Bijapur and Bidar.
words, he refused to recognize Shahu as the rightful Maratha King, as had been done all along by Aurangzeb. He also rejected the claim for chauth. Only sardeshmukhi was granted, and even for that, the rival claimants were left to fight it out. This was a negation of the policy of giving first priority to the task of restoring peace and order in the Deccan, for fighting each other. Both sides were only too likely to plunder the Mughal territories. In fact, that is what did happen Bahadur Shah had no sooner left the deccan than Shahu came out of Raigarh and issued an order to his sardars: ‘The Emperor has granted me the sardeshmukhi of these parks, but not yet the chauth. You should therefore raid the Imperial territories and create disorder these (till he agrees to do so).’

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Bahadur Shah’s Maratha policy was short-sighted and ill conceived. He was really called upon to choose between the advise of the Wazir who was the chief counselor in matters political, and that of the Viceroy of the Deccan whose special responsibility was the Deccan including Maratha affairs.

By rejecting the advise of Zulfiqar Khan he threw away a golden chance of settlement with the Marathas. The Marathas power was then at its lowest ebb. Shahu position was insecure at home, and if Bahadur Shah had extended recognition to him, he could have gained Shahu’s gratitude.

and friendship. Besides, Shahu's succession had always been favoured by Aurangzeb, and on coming to the throne, Bahadur Shah himself had tacitly recognized this claim by restoring Shahu to his former mansab, sending him a farman and other presents in acknowledgement of his congratulations on his succession\textsuperscript{13} and calling upon him to render military help against Kam Bakhsh.\textsuperscript{14} Shahu had expressed his inability to attend in person, but sent one of his best known sardars, Nimaji, with a large force, which did good service. Earlier, on his way back after escaping from captivity, Shahu had demonstrated his loyalty by ostentatiously visiting the tomb of Aurangzeb near Daulatabad.\textsuperscript{15}

As far the terms to be offered to the Marathas, Zulfiqar Khan who was a man of wide experience and well-acquainted with Maratha character and politics, seems to have been of the opinion that a policy of half hearted concession was of no use. He apparently felt that the times were ripe for a bold and far-reaching re-orientation of policy in the deccan with the object of making the Marathas partners in the empire from opponents, and of utilizing their military and administrative talents for the maintenance of peace and order in the Deccan by giving them a stake in its prosperity and good governance.

\textsuperscript{13} Bahadur Shah nama, 114; Tazkirat us Salatin Chagta, 86a, Maasir ul Umara, ii, 342.
\textsuperscript{14} Muntakhab ut Lubab, 625; Duff, History of the Marathas, I, 420.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 583.
Soon after Bahadur Shah’s departure, news was received of Maratha depredations in the subahs of Burhanpur, Bijapur and Aurangabad. A large band of Marathas entered the subah of Bijapur in 1710, and moved in the direction of Ahmadnagar. Rustam Khan Bijapuri, the Governor, who held the rank of 8,000/8000 moved against them, but they eluded battle. When this news reached Bahadur Shah, he reduced the rank of Rustam Khan by 1,000 as a mark of displeasure, but soon relented, and appointed the Khan to Berar in addition to his former charge. Meanwhile, another band of Marathas invaded Burhanpur, and plundered up to the outskirts of the capital. The Governor, Mir Ahmad Khan came out to fight, but was completely surrounded by the Marathas. The Khan put up a desperate fight but perished in the course of the battle, while two of his sons were wounded. Another band of Marathas appeared near Aurangabad and plundered the inhabitants of the surrounding areas. The deputy viceroy, Daud Khan Panni, took the field against them but the Marathas refused to fight and moved away at his approach. By this time, the rainy season was approaching and campaigning came to an end.16

After the rains, the Marathas appeared in force again. Chandrasen Jadhav besieged the foot of Vijaydurg, and then moved on to Kulbarga; Haibat Rao Nimbalkar, along with Sima, Jagannath etc. invaded Bijapur

but was chased out of the subah by Hiraman, the deputy of Daud Khan. Ganga, one of the dismissed sardars of Firoz Jang, created widespread disturbances in Malwa and Burhanpur. A body of 40,000 Marathas, raided the Junnair areas under the instructions of Shahu, and looted the jagirs of Zulfiqar Khan. The Mughals were apparently powerless to check these inroads, though Daud Khan Panni moved about with a large army, chasing the Marathas. He took over charge from Rustam Khan who had repeatedly failed against them, chased out Santa Ghorpade from Khandesh, made sound arrangements for its defence and sent his nephew, Alawal Khan to look after Berar. He also tried to sow dissension among the Marathas by his diplomacy. Towards the end of 1710, Rao Rambha Nimbalkar joined the Mughals. He was welcomed into Aurangabad by Daud Khan who secured for him the mansab of 7,000/6,000 and the rank of 5,000 each for two of his lieutenants. The next to desert was Paima Raj Sidhia. The most important defection, however, was that of Chandrasen Jadhav who joined the Mughals in March 1711, after a clash with Balaji Vishwanath over a hunting incident, though he had been in contact with the Mughals even earlier.

It was probably about this time that Daud Khan entered into a private pact with Shahu. According to this pact, the Chauth and

17. Akhbarat, August 1710 to March 1711.
Sardeshmukhi of the Deccan was promised to Shahu. However, it was not to be collected by the Maratha agents, but by Daud Khan’s deputy, Hiraman, who would pay it to the Mughals in a lump sum. The jagirs of the princes and the high grandees were to be exempt from any change. No written confirmation of this agreement was given to the Marathas, but it could hardly have been made without the knowledge and active support of Zulfiqar Khan, and the tacit consent of the emperor.

The pact was a god-send to Shahu for it bolstered his prestige in Maharashtra at a time when he had reached the nadir of his career. But it failed to bring peace to the unfortunate Deccan. The agreement ‘gave birth to an infinity of bickerings and troubles, which always ended in some blood… the hands of the Marathas stretched everywhere, their agents appeared in all places according to usage, and levied chauth’. In December 1711, Mir Ahmad Khan, the Governor of Burhanpur, was killed in a fight against a band led by a woman, Tulsi Bai. The Marathas besieged Karnul, Sholapur, Berigar and many other places in the Karnatak. Aku Ghorapade camped in the province with 70,000 men till he was chased across the river by Diler Khan and Abd-un-Nabi Khan. The depredations of the Marathas gave an opportunity to the zamindars

19. Ibid., 738, 742.
who rose up everywhere, and the authority of the Mughals remained only in name in the Karnataka.\footnote{Akhbarat, Dec. 1711 – July 1712.}

Daud Khan’s pact constituted a fundamental departure from the policy of Aurangzeb. The Maratha claim for the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan was conceded in substance, though not in form. But this did not bring to the Mughal Empire the benefits that might have been expected, which is, peace in the Deccan and the establishment of friendly relations with the Marathas. A major reason for this was that the Maratha king had ceased to have any real control over the Maratha chiefs, most of whom owed him only a tenuous allegiance and plundered largely on their own account. In other words, the forces of anarchy let loose in the Deccan as a result of the virtual destruction of the Maratha state by Aurangzeb could not be controlled easily, or in a short time. Only the joint cooperation of the Mughal authority and the Maratha king could bring the free booting Maratha chiefs under control once again. But past suspicions and Mughal arrogance stood in the path of such cooperation. The refusal of Mughals to put the agreement for \textit{Chauth} and \textit{Sardeshmukhi} in writing served to keep suspicious alive, and emphasized the essentially temporary nature of the agreement. The intrigues of the Mughal officials in the Deccan with the domestic enemies of Shahu also had an unsettling effect, and served to keep the Maratha civil war going.