CHAPTER I

POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF 18TH CENTURY INDIA

The opening years of the 18th century marked the zenith of the territorial expansion of the Mughal Empire, but within a few decades following the death of Aurangzeb, the Empire began to disintegrate. The Mughal Empire did much for India, but it failed to weld people into one nation, thereby creating a strong and enduring state. As there was a period of consolidation between the first adventure and the mature glory, so there was period of decline. It would not be wrong to say, that the decline of the Mughal Empire was the result of complex factors working over a long time. Several complicated aspects had kept a permanent mark on the Mughal administration. One of the primary causes of the decline of the Mughal Empire was the weakening of the central power immediately after the death of Aurangzeb. The arches and beams of the great edifice showed signs of cracks and strain, and the decline of the Empire seemed imminent. The emperor was still the "fountain of honour, the asylum of the Universe, only the fountain was throwing muddy streams on an unweeded garden, and the asylum was harbouring nothing, but wild beasts and proclaimed offender" 1.

Inspite of several attributes which Aurangazeb possessed, it is indeed sad to note, that several critics from time to time have given hostile statements to prove that he was an irrational ruler. Indeed, charges have been levelled against him by critics, so much so, that at the very outset, it became apparent that Aurangazeb was solely responsible for the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. He has been blamed for levying the Jiziya, destroying the Hindus temples, the dismissal of Hindu officials, to name a few.

Most of the charges levelled against Aurangazeb with whatever intensions they might be, are false, and are calculated only to widen the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims in India. Aurangazeb, a just ruler, whose sense of justice is not only admitted, but admired by worst of his critics, cannot be said to have persecuted his non-muslim subjects and to have dug his own grave by alienating their sympathies and support. The theory that Islam is a militant religion and recommends the use of force for its propagation and that it was spread at the point of sword had been full exploded, but hostile critics have continued to harp on the old strings and carried on their mischievous propaganda.

1. Jafar, S.M.: Some cultural aspects of Muslim rule in India, Peshawar, 1939, p.68
The Muslim world had been guided by the principles laid down in the Holy Quran which states: "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Bring them to the way of the Lord (Islam) by scientific reasoning and excellent preachings. To you your religion and to me mine". Such were some of the important doctrines followed by the Prophet in the plantitude of his power at the head of a strong and well organized state. The Muslim rulers submerged at the fountain of Islam and preached the principles of Islamic faith based on peace, good-will, justice and understanding. In fact, the same principles were followed by most of the Muslim rulers in India and abroad.

In India, the Zimmis were allowed full freedom of working and were granted liberty of conscience. It is indeed a pity that historians have always accused Aurangzeb as an antagonist to Hindus, and an icconoclast who took pleasure in destroying their temples, and harassing the Hindu populace in every possible way. "To achieve this end, historians have distorted the material that was available to them, in such a way, that his virtues have become vices". S.M. Jafar states that Aurangzeb, a shrewd politician, destroyed the temple and the mosques alike. He was not against the Hindu temples as such, but he punished those

1. Ibid, p.61-62
who built temples or mosques without seeking prior permission. In this, he did not make any discrimination.¹

Jnan Chandra, however, is of the view, that the antagonistic attitude of the historians towards Aurangzeb was on the basis of a Benaras Farman, which belonged to a Brahman family of Varanasi and which was produced by Mangal Pandey before the city Magistrate in 1905. It was published for the first time in the Journal of Asiatic Society Bengal in 1911, and since then it has been quoted by historians. The Farman was issued by Aurangzeb on 15th Jammah I, 1069 A.H. (10th March, 1659) to the local officers of Benaras. The Farman read:

"In accordance with our Holy Law, we have decided that the ancient temples shall not be destroyed, but new ones shall not be built. In these days of our justice, information has reached our Holy Court, that certain persons interfere and harass the Hindu residents of the town of Benaras. Therefore, Our royal command is that, you should direct, that no person shall in

unlawful way interfere or disturb the Brahmans and Hindu residents at these places. Treat this order as urgent”. Since Aurangzeb had ordered not to construct new temples, biased Historians quickly came to the conclusion that Aurangzeb was against Hindu temples. In fact, it can be also interpreted to say that Aurangzeb was keen to maintain the old temples and so refused to build new ones. Moreover, this Farman also reveals that Aurangzeb wanted his Hindu subjects to live in peace.

Benaras has one more Farman to its credit which runs thus:

"At this auspicious time, an August Farman was issued wherein Mahadhiraj Raja Ram Singh was represented to the most holy and exalted court, that a mansion was built on the banks of the Ganges by his father for the residence of Bhagwant Gosain, who is also his religious perceptor, and as certain persons harass the Gosain, therefore our royal command is that, after the arrival of this lustrous order, the present and future officers should direct that no person shall in any way interfere or disturb the Gosain so that he may continue with peace of mind to offer

prayers for the continuance of one God given Empire, that is destined to last for all times. The aforesaid Farman also clearly reveals that Aurangazeb disliked to interfere with the Hindu mode of worship. If Aurangazeb showed his desire that Hindus could offer prayers in their temples without any opposition then it is least justified to say that he wanted to destroy Hindu temples, or interfere with their religion.

There are also some other Farmans which show that Aurangazeb never tolerated any encroachments on the rights of his subjects, whether they be Hindus or Muslims. He severely dealt with the culprits. One of these Farmans refer to a complaint filed in the court of Aurangazeb against a Muslim resident of Benaras named Nazir Beg. "The officials of Haveli Muhammadabad - known as Benaras - Subah Allahabad, are to be informed that these days Arjun Mal and the Jangans, residents of Pargana Benaras, have appeared before the Emperor, and have made complaints that Nazir Beg, a resident of Benaras has by force taken possession of five Havelis which they had in Kasba Benaras. It is therefore ordered that if their case is found true, and the title of the complainants proved, Nazir Beg should not be allowed to enter the said Havelis, so that in future the Jangams

may not appear as complainants before me to seek their redress.\(^1\)
This aforesaid Farman proves that Aurangazeb did not hesitate to punish the culprits, even if they were his own Muslim or Hindu subjects. Justice reigned supreme.

Another Farman has also been discovered which relates to the restoration of the possession of land that was granted to the Jangams.

"All the present and future jagirdars and Karoris in pargana Havelli Benaras subah Allahabad are (hereby) informed that according to the order of the Empire dated 9 Amardad Illahi, 178 bighas of land has been granted to the Jangams to help them in their maintenance. The old officials have also verified this fact. On the present occasion also they have produced evidence bearing the seal of the Malik of the said pargana to the effect that they are, as before, in possession of the land and their title is clearly proved...... The said land should be returned to them from the beginning of the Kharif crop of San 10 as it was before, and they should not in any way be

interfered with, so that these Jangams may utilise the income of every crop...and pray for the existence of the Empire. Herein they shall fail not, and act otherwise¹.

Aurangzeb is generally known to be antagonistic towards the Hindus. Nevertheless, there are certain "Parwanas" which distinctly prove that Aurangzeb gave charities to the deserving Hindus. One such parwana was issued in the Regnal year 43 to the Mutasaddi of Dharangaon, informing him about the grant of two portions of barren land, and which was cultivatable in the village Malgaon, to the one Rangabhatt as 'Khayrat' (charity). The word 'Khayrat' used in the parwana is significant. It shows that the Emperor's award for charities was not limited to the Muslims alone.

"The present and future Mutasaddis (revenue officers ) of Dharangaon and other villages in tallaqqah pargana... should know that whereas two portions of cultivatable rent free barren land in the village Malgaon, has been granted in charity (Khayrat) in the name of Rang Bhatt son of Wek Bhatt, inhabitant of Arandol, the same should be left in the possession of the aforesaid as alms for the safety of one blessed head after due preparations for its deed, so that he may benefit from its production for

his livelihood and keep himself busy in preparing for the longevity of this Eternal Empire..." 1.

Aurangzeb not only gave 'khayrat' but several 'Parwanas' and 'Sanads' issued show that he granted daily allowances and charity to the Brahmans. A Brahman family of Ujjain was granted charity. Their descendants later became the main pujarís of the renowned Mahabaleshwar temple of Ujjain. There is every reason to believe that the pujaríship of this temple had been in the family from a remote past, and the persons in whose favour the 'Sanads' were granted were also worshipping in the Mahabaleshwar temple as priests. If it was so, it does not reconcile in any way with the views of the Historians who call Alamgir 'anti-Hindu' 2.


Aurangzeb treated all his subjects equitably, employed them in the service of the state, without any restriction of rank, race, or religion, rewarded their services without stint and entrusted them with great powers and responsibilities. "Hindus held the highest positions, next only to the Emperors, in the civil as well as military department of the Mughal Government. They enjoyed the freedom of worship and the liberty of conscience, and preached and propagated their faith without restrictions". While making a reply to a petition, praying for the dismissal of the 'Zimmis' from certain posts, Alamgir retorted: "Religion has no concern with secular business, and in matters of this kind, bigotry should find no place". Thus it cannot be denied that Aurangzeb paid special attention to the weal of the ruled. But, in spite of all these, he did not spare to punish the criminals. If Aurangzeb's subjects "betrayed him again and again, in spite of his repeated warnings, and pardons, he did not spare them even if they happened to be his nearest relatives". If Aurangzeb dismissed a certain number of Hindu

2. Ibid, p.295
clerks in the service of the state, it was because they were corrupt and incorrigible, and if he punished some Hindus, it was because they were found guilty of serious offences. It should be noted that even his own kith and kin could not escape punishment if found guilty of any offence 1. Thus it seems apparent, that in order to create communal disharmony, the hostile critics have given a religious colour to the administration of Aurangzeb.

As for the imposition of the Jiziya by Aurangzeb upon the Hindus, it is to be noted that it was not to compel the Hindus to become Muslims, as it is usually alleged by the critics. The object underlying in its imposition was not to compel non-muslims to renounce their religion and embrace Islam. In fact, those who escaped payment of a petty sum, by embracing Islam, lost their religion and gained nothing. Moreover, it would be a bad bargain for them, since the Muslims had to pay much more in the form of "Khams" and "Zakat", which were obligatory on Muslims, and from which the non-muslims were exempted. Thus, those Hindus who embraced Islam did so on their own free will. The Jiziya was levied on able-bodied males in lieu of military service, but they were exempted from it, if they served in the muslim army. "That it was not 'a tax on the free exercise of religion' is conclusively proved by the fact

that the priests and religious heads of the Zimmis were as a rule exempt from it." In fact, the very idea of re-imposing of the Jiziya, originated not with Aurangzeb, as it is alleged, but with the Muslim theologians. The latter pointed out that according the Islamic law, levying of the Jiziya on the non-Muslim subjects was essential. Thus 'His Majesty, thinking its imposition binding upon him' reimposed the Jiziya.

Aurangzeb paid special attention to the 'Zimmis' or the non-Muslim subjects. A non-Muslim subject had to pay poll-tax, for which the Muslim Government was responsible, for his security, personal freedom and religious toleration. Aurangzeb abolished various taxes that were not sanctioned by the "Shariyat". As to the status enjoyed by the Zimmis in the Islamic State, a writer observes in the Dictionary of Islam, "By paying the stipulated tax the Zimmis became free subjects of the conquering power and their condition is but little inferior to that of their Muslim fellow subjects." Thus Aurangzeb demonstrated toleration in his attitude towards the Zimmis. He did not impose Jiziya with the intention of injuring


the Hindus economically or otherwise.

However, with all his ardent efforts to rule his subjects according to the true Islamic faith, Aurangzeb failed considerably to checkmate the catastrophe of the mighty Mughal Empire. Several causes hovered round him which ultimately brought about his downfall. The powerful Marathas rose against him and saw the visions of a Hindu empire. Shivaji taught the Hindus to rise against the Mughal Empire and his constructive genius helped in its downfall. The tedious Deccan war had exhausted his armies and his prestige was at stake. Even before the end of his reign, confusion had already pervaded all over Hindustan, and the old and feeble ruler could no more shield the interests of the Empire with an iron hand. Thus with the best of intentions Aurangzeb could not accomplish an enduring state.

Aurangzeb's death almost came suddenly. He died on March 3, 1707, a few hours after performing his morning prayers. The death of Aurangzeb, however, was a signal for the disintegration and the ruin of the mighty Mughal Empire. It gradually lost its glory and prosperity which it had since long attained.

This phase marks the beginning of an important epoch in the history of the sub-continent. The mighty Empire witnessed a rapid decline so much so that the final catastrophe could be foreseen at a distance. Aurangzeb's apprehension that a civil war would break out was justified. No sooner had he breathed his last than his three sons, Prince Muazzam, also known as Shah Alam, Azam Shah and Kambakhsh entered into fratricidal quarrels for the possession of the throne of Delhi.

Muhammad Azam Shah, the second son of Aurangzeb, after making temporary arrangements with the regency at Raigarh proceeded towards Hindustan at the head of a grand army of the Deccan. He was accompanied among other nobles, Zulfiquar Khan Bahadur who was the General-in-Chief in his army. The latter disapproved of the whole move, since he was well aware of the fact, that Aurangzeb's eldest son, Muhammad Muassam, better styled as Shah Alam or Bahadur Shah was much more capable and dynamic and Aurangzeb always intended to place the former to the Imperial throne. Muhammad Azam Shah did not listen to Zulfiquar. The latter retired to Gwalior. In the meantime, Shah Alam came down from Kabul with the armies of the north and took possession of Delhi and Agra. In June, 1707 the two brothers met a few miles south of Agra.
In the battle that ensued at Jajaur, Shah Alam emerged victorious. Azam Shah and his son fell in the fight. The battle of Jajaur was a decisive one. Soon Shah Alam ascended the throne with the title of Bahadur Shah (1707-1712). Zulfiquar was pardoned and given the post of the Paymaster General, a post which implied supreme leadership of the military department.

Meanwhile, Kambakhsh, the youngest and the favourite son of Aurangzeb also made an attempt to question the authority of Shah Alam, and to disturb the settlement in the Deccan. Shah Alam had no intention to kill Kambakhsh. He had given orders to surround Kambakhsh but Zulfiquar, who had an aversion of the latter attacked him, and in the subsequent battle, Kambakhsh was killed. "Bahadur Shah was left free to deal with the Rajputs and other Hindu malcontents".

Bahadur Shah first of all turned his attention to Rajputana where the Rajput chiefs of Jodhpur, Amber and Mewar had all combined against the Emperor. The Rajputs were determined to face fearful odds in order to rescue Rajputana from the bondage of the Muslim yoke. The son and successor of Raja Jaswant Singh held aloof at Jodhpur. Jai Singh II expelled the Imperial officers from the State of Jaipur. Ajit Singh had recovered his ancestral provinces and expelled the Muslim Faujdar.

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Mihrab Khan. The Rajputs had practically defied the Imperial authority. After a good deal of fighting, order was restored and peace was made with the Rajputs. The Emperor followed his policy of reconciliation. "But the Jiziya was not taken off and so the Hindus were at best but half conciliated" Bahadur Shah paid a second visit to Rajasthan in 1710, and by his conciliatory policy won the loyalty and support of the Rajputs.

The Jats were a tribe who had always tried to defy the Imperial authority. The weakness of the Empire gave them an opportunity to take advantage of the situation. They set up a chief of their own and began an independent state at Bharatpur. The steps taken by the Jats, paved the way for the other rebellious states, who lost no time in raising their heads against the Imperial authority.

As Bahadur Shah was busy suppressing the Rajputs and the Jats, news came of the trouble caused by the Sikhs in Sirhind. When Bahadur Shah had ascended the throne, the relations of the sikhs with the Mughals had a different shape. Guru Govind

Singh had joined the services of the Emperor and everything seemed favourable. But soon after Guru Govind Singh was killed in 1708, and Banda, a close associate of Guru Govind, succeeded the latter and established himself at Sirhind. Banda, soon became a terror to the Imperial authority. "It was to crush this danger, which threatened the very heart of the Empire, that Bahadur Shah felt compelled to conclude his hostilities with the Rajputs, and hasten further north"¹. Various attempts were made by the Imperial officers to capture Banda, but all attempts ended in failure. The latter gathered a large following and attacked Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind. Wazir Khan was subsequently killed. This spelled disaster to the inhabitants of Sirhind. "The town was given up to plunder and a terrible vengeance was exacted from the Muslims in 1710. The most terrible cruelties were perpetuated and even women and children were not spared"². The Sikhs did not rest content. Trouble rose in Lahore. The local Governor was ousted, and the parganas of Kalanaur and Batala was raided. Bahadur Shah desired to proceed immediately against the Sikhs, but due to differences with his ministers, he could not do so instantly. In 1711, the Emperor sent an army against the Sikhs under Munim Khan who returned successful. Banda had escaped to the fort at Lohagarh. Thus the Sikh menace had come to an end for the

¹. Sharma, S.R.: Mughal Empire in India, Agra, 1974, pp.364-65

time being. But Banda could not be captured during the life time of Bahadur Shah. In fact he remained unsubdued till the accession of the Emperor Farukhsiyar (1716). The Emperor's health had gradually deteriorated. He moved to Lahore where he died the following year 1712. Thus, although Bahadur Shah's reign was a short one, it was not an unsuccessful one. He dealt with the rebellious states with courage and fortitude. Indeed, it is unfortunate, that he was too old and feeble to prevent the decline of the empire.

Bahadur Shah had four sons Jahandar Shah, Azim-ush Shan, Rafi-ush Shan and Khujista Akhtar Jahan Shah. After the death of their father, all the four sons tried to settle the division of the kingdom and property amicably. But soon jealousy took over and the arrangements made among the brothers were completely foiled. Meanwhile, Zulfiquar Khan, the Paymaster, who desired a puppet ruler to the throne for his own convenience to exercise power, helped Jahandar Shah, the eldest son of Bahadur Shah to ascend the throne. Thus Jahandar Shah became the Emperor in 1712. He was a weak man, devoted to pleasure and did not give himself any trouble regarding the state affairs. "It was a fine time for ministers and singers and all the tribes of dancers and actors".

Jahandar Shah was completely under the influence of the concubine Laikanwar. There was confusion all over the Empire and the administration was driven to doldrums. He was, however, not destined to rule for long. The Emperor was deposed and strangled in the Fort of Delhi under the orders of Farukhsiyar son of Azimush-Shan, who declared himself Emperor in 1713 A.D. The kingmaker Zulfiquar was executed.

Farukhsiyar (1713-19) owed his elevations to the throne to the two Sayyid brothers, Hussain Ali and Sayyid Abdullah, a saiyid of Barha to the office of 'Wazir'. Sayyid Abdullah became the Prime minister, and Sayyid Hussain Ali, the Commander-in-chief of the army. The Sayyid Brothers exercised the real powers, while Farukhsiyar became their puppet head. Meanwhile, Mir-Jumla, had risen into the king's favour. The former became envious at the power of the Barha brothers. Soon dissensions stirred between Mir-Jumla and the Sayyid brothers, with the result that the administration practically came to a standstill.

The Rajputs and the Jats created trouble during the reign of Farukhsiyar. The Emperor sent Sayyid Hussain Ali against Ajit Singh of Marwar, who had defied the Imperial authority, and even captured Ajmer. Hussain Ali compelled Ajit Singh to pay allegiance to the Emperor. Similarly, the Jats under Churaman renewed their plundering at the outskirts of Agra.
Churaman could not withstand the power of the Sayyid brothers, and soon he was also brought to submission.

There was another outbreak of the Sikhs in 1716. Banda, the Sikh Guru was still powerful. He came out of Lohagarh and ravaged the whole country. The Imperial forces, however, rose to the occasion and inflicted a crushing defeat to the rebels. Banda was taken prisoner and was brought as a captive to Delhi. This had a salutary effect upon the Sikhs and they did not dare to rise up against the Mughals for the time being.

The conditions of the Imperial authority was, however, degenerating day by day. The Sayyid brothers were busy consolidating their powers, whereas the Emperor sought to ruin the ministers. "Muslims and Hindus", says a chronicler of the time "united in prayers for the downfall of the Government, an unprecedented sort of fusion". The Emperor anxious to destroy the Sayyid brothers, planned devices one after the other. He set up a group of nobles to oppose their leadership. Inayatullah Kashmiri, who was dismissed in the past, was brought back as Revenue Minister. The Jiziyaa

was once again imposed. This drastic action was resented by all. The Hindus were not ready to agree to the Jiziya. They were greatly enraged because of the order. The relations between the Emperor and the ministers gradually became strained, and the administration of the Empire was totally neglected. As a result of his own weakness and follies, Farukhsiyar was deposed, imprisoned, blinded and subsequently put to death in Delhi on 16th May, 1719.

The Sayyid brothers made two attempts to make puppet kings Rafi-ud-Darjat (1719) and Rafi-ud-Dawla (1719) but they were frustrated by their premature deaths. The Sayyides at last found a competent ruler in Sultan Raushan Akhtar, son of Jahandar Shah, and grandson of Aurangzeb. Raushan Akhtar ascended the throne on 28th September, 1719 under the title of Mohammad Shah (1719-48).

The new Emperor was confronted with a difficult situation. The Empire was torn into several parts, and everywhere forces were working to bring about its complete disintegration. The Sayyid brothers were still very powerful. Muhammad Shah ran the administration of the State with the help of the Sayyid Brothers. But their ever increasing supremacy in the court became intolerable to the other nobles. Muhammad Shah also wanted to free himself from the fetters of the Sayyid Brothers. The
Emperor assisted Nizam-ul-mulk, the leader of the rival party to establish himself in the Deccan and rebel against the powerful Sayyids. Soon Nizam-ul-Mulk rose in open revolt against the Sayyids. Although the latter tried their level best to retain their power, they could not do so. Sayyid Hussain Ali was murdered in October, 1720, and Abdullah Khan was defeated and imprisoned in November, 1720. The power of the Sayyids were ultimately broken.

The Rajput, the Jats, and the Sikhs, were all for a lookout for destruction. When Muhammad Shah came to the throne, he attempted to pacify the people. "During his reign, the people enjoyed much tranquility, the Government being still respected, the honour of the State maintained, and the majesty of the throne preserved".¹ The power of the Marathas began to increase day by day. They succeeded in occupying Malwa, Bundelkhand, Gujrat and Berar. But soon they were pacified. They were vested with the independent sovereignty of the whole country, from Poona to Kolhapur. Muhammad Shah brought about peace for sometime to come.

After the fall of the Sayyids, Nizam-ul-mulk was called upon to accept the office of the Wazir in the Imperial Court. On reaching Agra in January, 1722, Nizam-ul-Mulk found that the whole edifice of the administration had crippled. He soon took advantage of the situation. In 1724, he returned to Deccan, and founded an independent Hyderabad State. He subsequently took the title of Asaf Jah. However, in 1724, the old minister departed, and was succeeded by Qamaruddin Khan. But the real power was vested in the hands of Abdus Samad, the paymaster General. Thus the condition of the Empire was on the verge of ruin.

When Muhammad Shah was facing trouble with the Sayyids, Mir Muhammad Amin, better known as Saadat Khan, who hailed from a Persian family of Khurasan, had helped the former a lot. In appreciation of his services, Muhammad Shah had appointed Saadat Khan, Governor of Agra in 1720. In 1724, he was made Governor of Oudh. Seeking advantage of the weak administration, Saadat Khan soon declared himself independent, and set up the Kingdom of Oudh. The event of the next seven years were of no historical importance. The Emperor abandoned himself to a life of pleasure. All the duties of the Empire were ignored, disorders multiplied and the miserable plight was telling on the subjects of the State. In the Deccan, however, affairs were in somewhat better state. Travelling had become safe, and
the people were spared of the double set of taxes. Malwa was
given to a Hindu officer named Giridhar Rai.

The weak defence of the North-West Frontier since the
time of Aurangzeb offered a splendid opportunity to the Persians
who intruded into India under the bold adventure, Nadir Shah.
The latter took full opportunity of the decomposed Empire of
Muhammad Shah and marched towards Delhi. The roads and
passes being neglected, everyone passed and repassed unobserved.
There was no intelligence forwarded in the State, who could
detect the happenings. The Emperor, drenched in music, pleasure
and several other vices, had no time left for administration.
The consequence that followed was that Nadir Shah plundered
Delhi to his heart's content. "The whole province of the Punjab
was thrown into great confusion and disorder. The pleasure
loving emperor and the Carpet Knights of the court, whose conduct
during Nadir's invasion, forms a tale of disgraceful inefficiency" 1
Delhi could offer a feeble resistance although the Subedars of
Deccan and Oudh were called upon to face the intruder. "There
was no unity, and the Emperor is said to have treated the invasion
with very little seriousness. Some of his own supporters were
lukewarm in his cause" 2. When the army was routed at Karnal,

1. Majumdar, R.C. : An Advanced History of India, Calcutta,
   1951, p.532.

the Mughal Emperor, Muhammad Shah visited Nadir Shah's camp, surrendered and brought him to Delhi. A truce seemed apparent when the inhabitants of Delhi once again rebelled against the Persians. This annoyed Nadir Shah. In the spell of furious rage, he ordered a general massacre and loot. He returned to Persia, with immense booty including the famous Kohinoor Diamond. A contemporary account says: 'Within the doomed areas, the houses were looted, all the men killed without regard for age, and all the women dragged into slavery'\(^1\). The territory West of India was ceded to Nadir Shah, and the Indian empire was once again reduced to nothing.

After Nadir Shah, Delhi was once again ruthlessly dealt with by Ahmed Shah Abdali who succeeded Nadir Shah. The invasion of Ahmed Shah Abdali, dealt a death blow to the already declining Mughal Empire.

The next Emperor Ahmad Shah (1748-1754) was unable to cope successfully with the disintegrating forces that had grown so alarming on all sides. His short reign of six years was full of invasions and utmost trouble. Ahmed Shah Abdali invaded India, for a second time, and forced the Emperor to cede to him Punjab and Multan. The Rohillas also rebelled against the Imperial authority, and soon declared themselves independent.

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Civil war broke out between the Iranians led by Sabdar, and Ghaziuddin, grand son of Nizam-ul-Mulk. The latter emerged successful, and forced Ahmed Shah to retire to Oudh. Soon the Emperor was deposed and blinded in 1754.

Next ruler to have succeeded was Azizuddin, who had long been in confinement, and who adopted the title of Alamgir II (1754-59). Ghaziuddin, who had placed Alamgir II, on the throne, became the all powerful administrator in the State. Ahmed Shah Abdali marched for the fourth time and captured Delhi. The new ruler found himself as much as a prisoner upon the throne as he was in his confinement. The dominion of Akbar and Aurangzeb had now reduced to a few districts in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital. Rajputana and Gwallor, Malwa and Gujrat all ceased to pay tributes. The Jats became independent under Suraj Mal. The Farrukhabad Afghans held central Doab, and the entire kingdom formed independent states of their own. Alamgir's attempts to free himself from the control of all powerful Wazir only resulted in his ruin, and he was put to death by the order of the Wazir in 1759.

Alamgir II was succeeded by his son Shah Alam II (1759-1806). The latter was a puppet head, and the administrator of the Empire was vested in the hands of Ghaziuddin. Meanwhile, the latter's
unscrupulous behaviour brought him many enemies in the court. Ghaziuddin sought the help of the Marathas, who readily agreed. The Maratha army, under the leadership of Raghunath Rao entered the capital and occupied Punjab. This alarmed the Muslims who invited Ahmed Shah Abdali to fight the Marathas. The two armies met at the historic field of Panipat in 1761. The Marathas were ruthlessly crushed and Peshwa died in 1761. The Marathas long cherished dream of founding an Empire was shattered. The defeat of the Marathas gave the English an opportunity to increase their power in the subcontinent. Ahmed Shah Abdali left India in 1762. In 1765, Shah Alam granted Bengal and Bihar to the East India Company, in return for an yearly pension.

Shah Alam II was succeeded by his son Akbar Shah II in 1806. His reign lasted for thirty one years. But his rule was practically confined to the four walls of Delhi. His reign witnessed the utmost influence of the English who had by then gradually come to the forefront in the subcontinent.

"The last Mughal Emperor of Delhi, commonly known as Bahadur Shah Zafar (1837-1858) was a great scholar of Persian, a marvellous calligrapher and a gifted poet of Urdu with Zafar as his pen-name"¹. From time of his succession to the throne, he

1. Hussain, Mahdi: Bahadur Shah II and the War of 1857 in Delhi, 1958, p.XV.
remained for the most part in Delhi Fort as a prisoner of the East India Company. He had nothing to do with the administrative machinery of the country, which lay mainly in British hands.

During the first war of independence 1857 the army asked for the support of his name, which he readily agreed to give. But he flatly refused any financial assistance since he was unable to bear any such burden. "I am with you whole heartedly. But I possess neither a treasure nor any army. If I get back my dominion, I shall bestow gifts on you in right royal manner". Though Bahadur Shah held the kingdom of Delhi, he could not administer it properly partly because of his age, and partly because of the already immoral army and disintegrated state.

In spite of his weakness as an administrator, he combined in his person the qualities of a faquir and king alike. It is indeed a misfortune that Bahadur Shah was born at a time when the mighty Mughal empire was in its last stages. In fact, he had a genuine love for India, and had the conditions been favourable, he could have exhibited his might as an able administrator. "He was a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity. And it is a fact that during the short period of his nominal and ineffective rule, the Musalmans had abandoned cow-slaughter". Thus in the face of several hardships, Bahadur Shah tried to keep the

1. Hussain, Mahdi; Bahadur shah II and the War of 1857 in Delhi, Delhi 1958, p.XVI.
2. Ibid, p.XX.
light of the Empire burning, but it was all in vain. By this time, the East India Company had forced themselves in with full vigour bearing Bahadur Shah a petty victim in the hands of the Company and the nobles.

Thus after Aurangzeb, rulers rose and fell with such rapidity that the equilibrium of the Empire was lost into oblivion. "Everyone strove only to collect the wreakage; no one seriously came to save the sinking ship. Nobles formed and reformed alliances for purely selfish ends, the puppet emperors were too feeble to resist their nefarious activities. The disruption and disintegration caused by successive wars of succession shook the foundation of Mughal Sovereignty and completely undermined the prestige of the ruling house" ¹. Thus the 18th century witnessed the gradual dismemberment of the Mughal Empire culminating in its virtual collapse. The consequent internal confusion and absence of administrative order emboldened the European traders to jump into the array of Indian Politics, and to convert India into one of the theatres of their hostilities in which British ultimately emerged successful.

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GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE LATER MUGHALS.

AURANGAZEB
(1658 - 1707)

MUHAMMAD SHAH
(Died 1676)

BAHADUR SHAH
(1707 - 1712)

KAM BAKHSH

JAHANDAR SHAH
(1712 - 13)

AZIM-US-SHAN

RAFI-US-SHAN

JAHAN SHAH

ALAMGIR II
(1754 - 59)

SHAH ALAM II
(1759 - 1806)

AKBAR II
(1806 - 37)

BAHADUR SHAH II
(1837 - 58)

FARRUKH SIYAR
(1713 - 1719)

MUHAMMAD SHAH
(1719 - 48)

AHMED SHAH
(1748 - 54)

BIDAR BAKHT

MUHAMMAD FAFI-UD-RAFI-UD-IBRAHIM DAULAH -DARJAT
(1720) (1719) (1719)

BAHADUR SHAH
(1837 - 58)

AKBAR II
(1806 - 37)

BAHADUR SHAH II
(1837 - 58)