Chapter-4

DELHI UNDER THE REBELS; PROBLEMS & DIFFICULTIES

In the preceding Chapter we have seen the rebels' occupation of Delhi, temporary ejection of the English from there, recognition of Bahadur Shah as their leader and an unprecedented growth of anarchy, where the bad characters made the life of common people miserable. In these circumstances Bahadur Shah was forced to visit Chandni Chowk and other Bazars to persuade the shopkeepers to carry business as usual and assuring their protection. But this persuasion bore no results and the shopkeepers continued to keep their shutters down. Bahadur Shah's problem was that even his nobility was not venturing to extend its support to him at that juncture. On 12th May, 1857, as we have already stated earlier, Bahadur Shah was distracted by the cries and petitions of people, the servants of Europeans, shopkeepers and rich people whose houses had been plundered.\(^1\) In that situation Bahadur Shah summoned a council of his nobles consisting of Mirza Ziauddin Ahmad Khan, Aminuddin Ahmad Khan, Hasan Ali Khan (uncle of Nawab of Jhajjhjar), Mian Nizamuddin, Mir Hamid Ali Khan, the famous Urdu poet Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, Nawab Muddhan Saheb, Khan Jahan Khan, Iradat Khan, Mufti Sadruddin Khan Azurda and Karam Ali Khan. In this meeting Mirza Moinuddin

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\(^1\) Metacalfe, p. 86.
Hasan Khan had also come in the company of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan. In view of deteriorating law and order outside Delhi, and in the city of Delhi, Moinuddin was appointed to restore order and provided a military contingent also.\(^1\) Apparently, it was a temporary arrangement to meet the exigencies of the situation. However, the King was extremely upset over the developments as is evident from the directives to Moiunuddin Hasan Khan who was directed in the evening to chastise the mischief mongers prudently so that the people were to get relief. He also directed Moinuddin Hasan Khan to discharge his responsibility for the sake of God and to obtain His approval for the protection of the people as his permanent duty.\(^2\) Unfortunately, Mirza Moinuddin Hasan Khan could not succeed much in the discharge of his responsibility due to factionalism. Disputes between the Meerut and Delhi sepoys on the distribution of plunder made the situation more grim. Not only that, the sepoys, unaware of Imperial Court's etiquettes, occupied the courtyard of Diwan-e-Khas\(^3\), and addressed the King in a manner which was considered to be disrespectful causing annoyance to many close to the King.\(^4\) The attitude of the sepoys towards the King was not deliberate though, as they were not trained in the sophisticated atmosphere of the Court. However, this conduct

\(^1\) Nizami, P 123, Jeevan Lal says that Mirza Moinuddin Hasan Khan was appointed when Hasan Ali Khan (uncle of Nawab of Jhajhjhar) declined to take up the responsibility. see Metcalfe, p.85.
\(^2\) Nizami, pp.123-24
\(^3\) Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 17th May 1857. The Akhbar further reports the appointment of Mufti Sadrudin as Sadr-i- Aala, Maulvi Abbas Ali and Karam Ali Khan as Munisif, criminal and civil courts.
\(^4\) Jeevan Lal tells us that the King was addressed " Are Budha listen", " I say you old fellow", etc. See Metcalfe, pp. 86-87. According to Delhi Urdu Akhbar of 17th May 1857, the Red Fort looked like a military contonment. See Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 17th May 1857.
by the Sepoys in the city and the Court let Mirza Ghalib to exclaim that they (rebels) laid into dust both the honour and mansion of those who were distinguished for wisdom and good name, while those who had neither power nor pelf shot into prominence. Men of valour were scared of their own shadows, and mere troopers ruled over all and the sundry.¹

On 13th May, 1857 Moinuddin Hassan Khan was entrusted additional responsibilities. He was appointed Kotwal of Delhi and head of Commissarate in the city. This was, however, a formality. Reports of rapine and plunder continued to pour in. Bahadur Shah felt helpless, shut himself up and refused to meet anyone.² Delhi continued to reel under the mercy of undesirable elements, mostly in guise of the rebels. Similar situation prevailed in the Red Fort. The abode of the King was turned into a residence of native infantry, who occupied the Fort, and placed their own guards without any officers to command them³. The behaviour of the Sepoys explains that they did not trust the King at all.

Bahadur Shah was desperate. Despite all the limitations, he was trying his best to do something for the protection of the people. On 15th May, he made another effort by raising a police force of one hundred men for the safety of the city. Again he could not succeed.⁴ In order to strengthen the City administration, Bahadur Shah appointed

2. Metcalfe, p. 87.
Qazi Mohammad Faizullah and Abdul Hakim as city Kotwal and Naib Qazi of the administration of Justice.\(^1\) This appointment was probably to support Moinuddin Hasan Khan who held a superior position as Kotwal of Delhi. These appointments were still inadequate to control the plunderers and disobeying Sepoys.\(^2\) Bahadur Shah was making relentless efforts to raise troops. On 15th May orders were issued to recruit horsemen at a monthly salary of rupees 30 and infantry at rupees 10 per month.\(^3\)

It appears that till 15th May the Princes were not involved actively in the administrative affairs and to control the unruly elements in the city. Perhaps disillusioned by the failure of the nobility and Moinuddin Hassan Khan in controlling the law and order, Bahadur Shah considered it necessary to involve the Princes by assigning military responsibilities to them. Earlier on 11th May, he had directed Mirza Mughal, Mirza Abdullah and other Princes to help restore order in the city.\(^4\) Now Bahadur Shah assigned portfolios to the Princes designating them to various positions. For example, Mirza Mohammad Jawan Bakht was appointed Wazir of the Empire (Practically he did not function), Mirza Zaheeruddin Bakht (Mirza Mughal), Commander-in-Chief of the forces (infantry, cavalry and other branches

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1. Metcalfe, p. 92, According to Abdul Latif, Qazi was appointed on 17th May. See Nizami, pp. 124-25.
2. Metcalfe, pp. 57-58; Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 24th May, 1857, published the plight of the people of Delhi who continued to suffer at the hands of plunderers in the city in the guise of Telangas.
3. Delhi Proclamation, May 1857, cited in Charles Ball, The History of Indian Mutiny, Vol. I, p. 459; Jeevan Lal however says that the infantry was to be paid at the rate of Rs.5 per month, see Metcalfe, p. 92.
of army), Mirza Abdul Hasan alias Abdullah, Mirza Sohrab, Mirza Mohammad Khizr Sultan, Mirza Kochak Sultan and Mirza Abu Bakar were given different military positions. Probably, the poor King expected that their royal prestige would enable them to enforce authority over the rebels. But the Princes lacked the ability and competence to discharge their responsibilities. Contrary to the expectations of Bahadur Shah, power and authority which was thrust on the poor Princes made them fall into intrigues and conspiracies among the rival factions of the Princes. Consequently, it brought no good to the fledgling administration. The Princes began to exert their authority and violated all norms of regular administration. Further, the King's authority was reduced to nought as the Sepoys captured his private office, placed guards on the Diwan-i-Khas and substituted the King's personal staff with their own. It is not clear as to how the Princes reacted to a virtual imprisonment of the King by the Sepoys. Their silence, however, suggests their connivance. It appears that the developments since 11th of May to 15th of May in Delhi had greatly injured the mind and soul of Bahadur Shah. His agony can be understood from his paternal and sermonial advices to Mirza Mughal and Mirza Khizr Sultan on 16th May: Dear ones, this is the time of great test and trial. Don't dishearten people. Do such work which is useful and provides relief to the people and be a source of approval of the Creator. Of the mischief mongers some should be blown

2 Metcalfe, p.60.
away through the mouth of the guns and some should be hanged to
death. Of all the trouble makers some should be imprisoned and some
should be given such a punishment that not even an old women suffers
at the hands of any oppressor, so that on the day of Judgement one
is not ashamed. It is sad that at this old age when we were passing
our days in this uneternal world in the thought of the eternal abode
and were in pleasure slumber that we were suddenly thrown into
this conflict and had to become ashamed and regretful. The oppressed
people pour into us and weep over the destruction of the people and
oppressions of the wicked men. My heart is burnt hearing all these
miseries and lose my senses on my own helplessness. Ah! Our doings
have taken the form of disorder and mischief and has placed the
world and the people of the world in an extremely wretched condition.
Oh! my God, save us from the mischief of this world and the last
world\textsuperscript{1}. Bahadur Shah's advices to the Princes however are seen to
have made little impact. Their appointment to various positions of
authority had made them more greedy and turned them into exploiters.
Since the Princes had their own factions of Sepoys, they began to
use them to exact money from leading city bankers. A large number
of documents preserved in the National Archives, Delhi, refer to
the role of the Princes in pressurising the rich people specially the
bankers for money. For example, two leading Mahajans; of Delhi
Jugal Kishore and Sheoprasad, through their petition to the King,
drew his attention urging upon him to prohibit all the princes

\textsuperscript{1} Nizami, p. 124.
particularly Mirza Mughal, Mirza Khizr Sultan, Mirza Abu Bakar and Mirza Abdullah from deputing telangas or Sepoys to their residences for realizing money. They prayed that Najibs should be deputed for their protection. The King ordered Mirza Mughal, the Commandar-in-Chief of forces, to comply with the request. It is however doubtful that Mirza Mughal honoured the orders of the King in letter and spirit as we find the latter made another effort to reorganise the administration of Delhi. Jeevan Lal tells us that on 16th May 1857, the King appointed Mufti Yusuf Ali Khan, Mir Abdul Bahadur, Captain Dildar Ali Khan Bahadur, Syed Sharif Ali Khan faujdar and Nazrul Khan Bahadur. Despite this, the law and order situation of the city remained far from satisfactory giving great annoyance to the King. Even the King's personal servants such as Kashi Nalei, a thanedar, pressurised the shopkeepers to pay bribe to him. On receiving complains, the Emperor ordered to send him to the prison.

The law and order condition of the suburbs of Delhi was also causing great concern to the Emperor. The caste composition around Delhi was such that following the outbreak of the rebellion the dominant caste in their respective regions such as the Mewatis, the Gujars and Jats began to loot and plunder people. Sometimes intercaste conflicts followed by plunder. Consequently, Bahadur Shah directed Mirza Abu Bakar to march against two Gujars and chastise them.

2. Order of Bahadur Shah written with the pencil on the petitions of Sheoprasad and Jugal Kishore. See Press List of Mutiny papers.
4. Ibid. pp. 93, 94-95.
Mirza Abubakar marched along with the Turk cavalry and artillery, surrounded the Gujar villages and directed the guns towards their dwellings. Terrified Gujars abandoning their villages fled away. Mirza Aminuddin Khan was directed to maintain order in the Mewat region specially Ferozepur Jhirka and Gurgaon. Now the King also wrote letters to the rulers of Patiyala, Jaipur, Alwar, Jodhpur, Kota, Bundi, Malairkotla and Faridkot asking them to appear before the court. Apparently, this attempt was to strengthen the imperial authority so as to manage the administration of Delhi and outside. Bahadur Shah also invited Walidad Khan, the Nawab of Malagarh, who came to his presence on 16th May 1857.

Bahadur Shah's anxiety appears to be increasing day by day as he lacked competent and trusted persons. He found that those who were assigned responsibility earlier, were either totally incapable men or had secret alliances with the English. First of all, Moinuddin Hasan Khan, who had been appointed Kotwal of Delhi had to be dismissed within a couple of days of his appointment for committing excesses on people of Delhi. Thereafter Qazi Faizullah was appointed Kotwal on 15th May. But he had also to resign and Syed Mubarak Shah of Rampur was appointed Kotwal in his place. He remained in this position till the suppression of the rebellion in Delhi.

2 Ibid. p.6a. He also sent letters to other ruling houses.
3 Zakaullah p. 688.
5 Zakaullah, p 688
Places like Najafgarh, Mahrauli, Shahdra, Paharaganj, Badarpur etc. where the thanas existed earlier, were provided with thanedars,¹ but most of them were incompetent and not loyal to the King.² Maulvi Mohammad Baqar, superintendent of the mint, had offered all services to the King but secretly he was a well wisher of the Englishmen. Among the Princes, Mirza Abu Dakar, whom the Emperor had directed to suppress the Gujars, had been divested of his powers on 15th May.³ On 17th May one of the servants of Mirza Mughal was apprehended on the charges of providing intelligence to the Englishmen. He was, however, released on Mirza Mughal's orders.⁴ Bahadur Shah had himself become too old and without the assistance of able officers it was difficult to achieve success. His advisors were also treacherous. However, within that short period whatever plans he made for the welfare of the nation and the orders he issued to give effect to them will always be remembered and appreciated.⁵

A desperate Bahadur Shah appears to be always thinking of controlling the uncontrolable situation of administration. On 18th May, he made another attempt to encourage the Princes to hold their responsibilities. He now appointed Mirza Mughal, Mirza Khizr Sultan, Mirza Abu Bakar and Mirza Abdullah to different commands over the rebels.⁶ It appears that the King's pleadings to some extent moved Mirza Mughal and he took a round of the city to check the unruly

¹ Zakaullah, p. 689.
² Press List of Mutiny Papers, No. 39 p. 5b.
³ Ibid. p. 4a.
⁴ Ibid. p. 5b.
⁵ Sautantra Dilli, p. 65.
⁶ Metcalfe, p.96, For more details see Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 24th May, 1857.
elements. His generous attitude and assurances to the people partly worked and some of the shopkeepers of the city opened their shops. Qazi Faizullah, who had been appointed Kotwal of Delhi, worked with vigour and looked after the administration of the thanas. He also punished the bad characters. Peace was partially restored in the city. But some of the distant parts of the city continued to remain in the grip of mischief mongers. A group of them surrounded the houses of Kalyan Singh, Kishen Garia and Nagar Seth, obviously demanding money from them.¹

The concern of Bahadur Shah was not confined to the maintenance of law and order. He also faced a serious economic crisis. His treasury was vacant while the number of sepoys in Delhi was increasing day by day. Bahadur Shah was badly in need of money. Consequently, he urged upon the Mahajans of Delhi to advance loans. On 21st May, the city bankers raised a sum of rupees one lakh for the payment of the Sepoys.² Still peace continued to elude the city. This happened owing to the factional politics of the Princes. They remained indifferent despite continuous complaints. If one section of the Princes attempted to restore some peace, the other section encouraged the rebels and his supporters to disrupt orders. Bahadur Shah was in a shocked state over this state of affairs. He was monitoring the situation regularly in his Darbar. On 20th May one of his close associates and advisers

¹ Nizami, p 125.
² Metcalfe, p. 99.
Hakim Mohammed Ahsanullah Khan, in an attempt to reduce the anxiety of Bahadur Shah, stated that the present state of Delhi was a handy work of bad characters irrespective of their religion who were quarrelling time and again with wealthy men on various pretexts which has caused disorder during those days. On 21st May a group of people plundered the house of Ram Saran Das an English Official. Another group of them attempted to plunder money from the author of the 1857 Ka Tarikhi Roznamcha. The Princes were informed of the happenings. They ingnored. The King was angry and chastised the Princes as well as the commanders of the army. On 22nd May, 1857 Bahadur Shah directed Mahboob Ali Khan, the Khawaja Sara, to do something to check the growing oppression and injustice to the people. On 23rd May the King while holding darbar saw a number of English women and children who had been brought for execution by the rebels. Mian Mahboob Ali Khan the Khawaja Sara who also did not like to shad blood of the innocents was appointed by Bahadur Shah and was directed by Bahadur Shah tried to stop excesses on the people. The steps taken by Mahboob Ali Khan were opposed by a section of the rebel Sepoys and led to angry exchange of words with them. Bahadur Shah was extremely sad. On 24th May Bahadur Shah once again addressed Mirza Mughal, Mirza Abdullah and Mirza Khizr Sultan with a sad heart saying that he was extremely upset to learn about the developments from reliable servants. To

1. Nizami, p. 125.
2. Ibid. p.126.
3. Ibid. p. 127.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
quote his words: "I am bewildered. I have no remedy for this because no one listens to me nor there is any impact of my advices on them. "He told the Princes further, "Don't try to go in search of a Mahdi at this time. Don't sleep nor sit idle. Rise like brave men. If you take cognizance of my advice then certainly you will be rewarded by God and receive your hereditary treasure. Thus first of all try to save these English women and children from the hands of these oppressors. The work of these cruel men is to harm and my intention is to protect them and obtain the approval of God. Do ensure that none of the women, children, weak and disabled persons of them is executed. Take care of all of them for supply of their necessities (food etc.). Depute some good natured people so that he provides them adequately and save them from hunger and thirst. Their execution is against the mercy and equivalent to uprooting the foundation of sharia, because by acting in this way one severes his relation with the religion and falls in the track of torment and difficulties. The pleader of the sinners, our Prophet has forbidden the execution of women and children."1 Abdul Latif further says that the sermon of Bahadur Shah had an impact on the Princes. They saved the children and women and provided them shelter in Kotwali of Red Fort.2

The first sign of Bahadur Shah's sovereignty in the new setup is seen through the minting of coins in his name. The responsibility of the mint was entrusted to Munshi Ajodhiya Prasad and the mint

2. Ibid. p. 128; Also see Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 31st May, 1857; Press List of Mutiny papers, No., 1 p.21.
began to function from 25th May 1857 at Katra Mashru. The coin carried the following inscription, (In the world by the generosity of Almighty God the coin is struck for Bahadur Shah the King of Hindustan).

Interestingly, while Bahadur Shah was striving hard to put the administration on the rails facing heavy odds and a host of undesirable elements in Delhi, a number of rebel Sepoys appear to have collected a considerable amount through loot and plunder in Delhi. Some of the Sepoy plunderers left the city with their booty, but were plundered in the way by roaming bands of plundering Gujars and Mewatis, returned to Delhi only to add problems. Those who were still staying in the city began to change their silver coins into gold or resorted to hoarding. This resulted in the rise of the price of gold coins to double from 16 to 32 rupees in Delhi. In the exchange transaction from silver to gold, a number of soldiers were also duped. At the same time, due to the excessive demand of gold coins counterfeit gold coins gained wide circulation in the market forcing the government to issue a proclamation asking the soldiers to desist from such purchases. The duped soldiers greatly chagrined for the loss of money, became more reckless in plundering people to recoup themselves.

The Princes took advantage of this situation and provided protection only to the rich persons who gave them money and the common man was thrown at the mercy of the plunderers. The prevailing conditions in Delhi was extremely painful to Bahadur Shah who once again wished

to retire to the tomb of Khawaja Bakhtiyar Kaki at Mehrauli. In that confused situation and disorder in Delhi, Bahadur Shah issued a proclamation by the beat of drum that a batta would be levied on company's coins. The people of Delhi were also warned not to give shelter to the mischief mongers in their houses, and if any offenders were found in their houses they would be blown through the mouth of the guns.

In this confused state of affairs when the Princes' cooperation was almost negligible, Sepoys's factionalism had weakened the rebels in Delhi and the rebels plunder had created an extremely chaotic scene, Bakht Khan appeared on scene. Bakht Khan was a veteran of many wars while serving in the Bengal Army. He had an experience of 40 years as subedar of artillery. He was honoured on 26th May with a title of Bakhat Buland Khan by Bahadur shah. It appears that Bakht Khan's appearance before Bahadur Shah greatly relieved the latter as he was a silent spectator and lived under continuous fear of two different groups of Sepoys led by Mirza Mughal and Mirza Abu Bakar who were conspiring against him. Bhakht Khan arrived in Delhi with the Bareilly contingent of Sepoys with a treasure of 4 lakhs. Bakht Khan received many honours including the title

1. Metcalfe, p. 102; Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 24th May, 1857.
2. Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 24th May, 1857.
3. Nizami, p. 129, Here it may be pointed out that Sen and Spear say that Bakht Khan appeared before the King on 2nd July, See Sen, 1857 p.83; Spear, p. 208 which is based on Jeevan Lal's narratives.
4 Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 12th July, 1857; Nizami, p. 124.
5. See, Iqbal Husain in We Fought Together for Freedom, ed. by Ravi Dayal, New Delhi, 1995, p.16.
of *Sahib-i-Alam*. Presence of Bakht Khan in Delhi was a moral booster to Bahadur Shah. It was however not a guarantee of peace or assurance of good conduct of the Princes. Realising the complexity of the situation, as well as to strengthen his own position against the conspiratorial attitude of his own blood, Bahadur Shah decided to confer unprecedented honours and responsibilities on Bakht Khan. An imperial order was issued cancelling all earlier administrative arrangements placing all the military officers commanding regiments under the charge of Bakht Khan. To appease Mirza Mughal his position was designated as Adjutent General. Bakht Khan was given authority to deal with the Princes if they were found plundering. The anguish and concern of Bahadur Shah in bringing normalcy to Delhi may be judged from his orders to Bakht Khan reproduced in the *Delhi Urdu Akhbar* dated 12th July, 1857. Bakht Khan was to destroy the positions of the ejected English army and expel them from the ridge; to remove the sepoys from Red Fort by providing alternative accommodation to them with a stern warning to desist from plunder; to arrange for payment of soldiers, both new and old servants; to collect land revenue and control the *thanas* through the army and to punish the ruffians plundering the people of Delhi in the guise of Sepoys.

Further developments in Delhi indicated that Bakht Khan appeared to have been in the know of the Princes' role in the disruption of

normal life in the capital. However, probably he did not visualise the extent of the intrigues and other difficulties which he would face at their hands. Like a good soldier, Bakht Khan exhibited confidence in overcoming these difficulties and carrying out his assigned responsibilities.¹ In maintaining law and order the role of Kotwal of Delhi was very crucial. Realising this, Bakht Khan made the Kotwal fully responsible for the law and order failing which he was warned that he would face the highest punishment.²

Since the outbreak of the rebellion, trade and commerce in Delhi had been adversely affected. The wandering bands of the sepoys and Princes had demoralised bankers and shopkeepers who sat in their houses. To allay their fears, Bakht Khan through a proclamation allowed them to keep arms at their shops. Shopkeepers having no arms were directed to obtain it from the military headquarters. He, however, warned them of capital punishment if they were caught spying or supplying provisions to the enemy.³

A great task before Bakht Khan was to restore confidence not only among the Mahajans, traders and common men of Delhi but also among the former jagirdars, pensioners and madad-i-maash holders who were residing in Delhi and its suburbs. The uncertainty created by a section of rebels in Delhi due to their attitude had caused great concern to the jagirdars, madad-i-maash holders and the pensioners. Obviously, to save their jagirs, madad-i-maash grants and pensions,

¹ Metcalfe, p. 135.
² Ibid.
³ Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 12th July, 1857.
some of them were secretly sympathising with the English and some were suspected of working as their spies. For Bakht Khan it was an extremely dangerous situation for the safety of Delhi. In order to allay their fears he issued an order assuring them that they would be fully compensated for the losses suffered during the period of struggle with the English. He however warned them of deterrent punishment if anyone of them was caught spying or supplying provisions to the English forces.¹

Bakht Khan's problem was also to raise fresh troops for an efficient administration and defence of Delhi. Consequently, he began to pay attention to this problem. He had to face financial difficulties as the treasury was empty and probably he was not ready to spend his own treasure for the recruits. Moreover, the old soldiery serving at the Palace had not been paid for a long time and they were also clamouring for the payment of their arrears. By chance on 28th May, on the demand of Bahadur Shah, a sum of rupees One lakh seventyfive thousand was received. The newly recruited soldiers had been assured payment of rupees thirty for a sawar and rupees ten for an infantry. This arrangement was being violated by Mehboob Ali Khan who attempted to pay rupees nine and seven to the cavalry and infantry men which led to violent protest. The cavalry was persuaded to agree and serve on a payment of rupees forty five per month.²

¹ Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 12th July, 1857.
² Metcalfe, pp. 104-6.
While the soldiers serving the King received some relief, the civil servants working in different branches of the administration were still clamouring for disbursement of salary as is evident from **Delhi Urdu Akhbar**. The Akhbar championing the cause of the civil servants urged upon the government to arrange payment of the salaries to save them from starvation. It also appealed to the government to keep the sepoys under control.¹

No government could be run without a permanent source of income. The money arriving from Rohtak had already been spent, the imperial treasury remained empty and the government continued to face acute financial difficulties. Now, on behalf of the Emperor on 1st June 1857, Gridhari Lal and Girwar Singh, the two leading bankers of Delhi, were asked to advance a loan of rupees three lakhs. They obeyed the command.² This money was too small for the expenses of the Kingdom. In order to raise more money, all the Mahajans of the city were summoned to the Fort. The houses of those who avoided to honour the summons were surrounded by troops.³ Under the compulsion, the bankers paid rupees one lakh promising to pay another one lakh of rupees within four days.⁴ Some of the bankers like Salik Ram, Zorawar Singh, Raja Bhola Nath, Aramji Ramji Mal, Gauhar Wala, Munshi Sultan Singh and Mathura Das assured the King that in future money would be supplied to the King regularly.⁵

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4. Metcalfe, p. 113; Nizami, pp 133-134.
The rebellion had also affected adversely the working of the city municipal administration. It suffered on account of increasing filth and uncleanliness. The Delhi Urdu Akhbar in its issue of 14th June, 1857 reported that the worst affected Mohallas were Koocha-i-Raiman, Balli Maran, Kocha Mallik Attar etc. The difficulties of people of Delhi further increased when the water carriers stopped attending to their normal duties. The grocers, the grain merchants and other small shopkeepers added to the miseries of the people by hoarding the essential commodities. The result was that an artificial scarcity of food grains and other essential commodities caused great hardships to the people. Prices of essential commodities were sky high. The Delhi Urdu Akhbar shed tears of sincerity and quotes the rates of various commodities and complains of sale of adulterated ghee, oil, and flour etc.

Bahadur Shah was receiving all this distressing news regularly. He was fed up with the prevailing situation. He was not getting any help from the princes and the administrative machinery had been totally in a mess. Fed up with this situation, Bahadur Shah summoned all the Princes and expressed his desire to proceed to Makkah for Haj and pass his remaining life there. The princes once again assured him to normalise the administration. This, however, remained a hollow promise.

It would be seen that the civil as well as the military administration

1 Press List of Munity Papers, no.61, S.No.43, Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 14th June, 1857
2 Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 14th June, 1857.
3 Ibid
in Delhi was not working properly causing great distress to the general population. Even the presence of Bakht Khan with superior powers assigned to him by the King, appeared to be ineffective. The reason was not far to seek. Sudden rise of Bakht Khan to prominence had not only caused jealousy of the Princes but also the nobility and other high officers, including the Sepoys. Naturally, he was not receiving proper assistance from the persons in authority who could provide real support in arresting the deteriorating administration in Delhi. It is said that on 2nd July Bakht Khan visited the Red Fort and held a long discussion with Bahadur Shah. Here the news given by Jeevan Lal is revealing. "The King's orders were that the inhabitants of the city must not be plundered. The King said it was of no use his giving orders, as they were never obeyed, and yet no one cared to enforce them. He further said that the mainliness and wisdom is to protect the English women and Children from the oppressors, and pleaded for providing all necessities of life to them so that they did not die of hunger and thrust. Bahadur Shah quoted a hadith of Prophet Mohammad where in he has forbidden the execution of women and children.\textsuperscript{1} Mohammad Bakht Khan offered his services as Commander-in-Chief of the forces with a view to enforce general discipline. The King grasped his hands in a token of friendship. He was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the whole of the forces. A proclamation was issued ordering the attendance of all officers

\textsuperscript{1} Nizami, p.128.
in command of regiments to receive instructions from Mohammad Bakht Khan. Mirza Mughal was appointed Adjutent General. Mohammad Bakht Khan informed the King that if any of the Princes attempted to plunder the city, he would cut off their noses and ears. The King replied you have full authority. The appointment of Bakht Khan with sweeping powers to deal with everyone, interfering in administration, however, brought little impact on Delhi administration. Here it may be pointed out that Jeevan Lal in his diary of 2nd and 3rd July, 1857 gives some conflicting statements. For example, in his statement of 2nd July after stating conferment of full authority on Bakht Khan, he refers to the statement of Bakht Khan: "---he would not trouble the king for any assistance, and if his troops were victorious he would pay in any surplus to his treasury. The King ordered four thousand rupees to be distributed among the Bariely troops for festivity (ziyafat)." In his entry of 3rd July, Jeevan Lal says, "On this same date orders were issued by the King to Bakht Khan to arrange for the monthly payment of the King's servants." The question arises as to how Bakht Khan could manage to pay the King's servants when the treasury was empty. However, after being appointed to the position of authority and enjoying the confidence of the Emperor, Bakht Khan began to work with enthusiasm. But the continuous interference by the princes and conspiracies by some

1. The date of Jeevan Lal differs with that of Abdul Latif in regard to the appearance of Bakht Khan to the Imperial Court. See Metcalfe, pp. 133-36; Nizami, p. 129.
3. Ibid. p. 135.
of the nobles had placed Bakht Khan in a very difficult position. His actual position was that theoretically he was head of the Army and Commander-in-chief of the rebel forces after King's transfer of power to him. However, practically he could only exercise authority on his own Bareilly brigade and the *Jihadis* who had accompanied him to Delhi. The number of the latter began to swell thanks to the efforts of the *ulema* to persuade Muslims to join the struggle declaring the conflict with the English as a holy war (*Jihad*). The ordinary Musalman influenced by the call to defend the religion and to expel the English from India, was strengthening the position of *jihadis* day by day. Bakht Khan became their leader. The *jihadis* popularly known as *Wahabie*s in some contemporary works, were the followers of Syed Ahmad Bareilvi. The Urdu contemporary historian, Zakaullah, sneeringly tells us that with the arrival of Bakht Khan the cry of *jihad* against English became louder.\(^1\) Interestingly, the *jihadis* were pouring in from different parts of the country such as Hansi, Hissar, Jaipur, Nasirabad, Tonk and Bhopal which were well known Rohilla Afghan settlements. And they were under the great influence of Maulvi Abdul Ghafoor, Syed Sarfaraz Ali, Imam Khan Risaldar and Ghaus Mohammad Khan. The *jihadies* generally belonged to weaker sections of the society (weavers, artisans and other wage earners). Zakaullah contempuously described them as ill-dressed, ill-fed and hungry people who lived on the charity of the rich in Delhi.\(^2\)

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1 Zakaullah, pp. 675-76.
2 Ibid p. 675.
Bakht Khan's difficulties may be imagined from the fact that his power and authority was dexterously missused by these persons who enjoyed influence. They were active in intrigues. A levy of eight annas per maund on sugar was imposed without the knowledge of Bakht Khan on 12th July. An irritated Bakht Khan ordered withdrawal of the tax immediately on the ground that it was bound to affect regular supplies to the city creating more distress to the people and soldiers. Similarly, Bakht Khan also abolished the salt tax. Such measures and the character of Bakht Khan in dealing with the ruffians made him quite popular as may be inferred from a historical Masnavi praising him, which appeared in Sadiq-ul-Akhbar, Delhi of 27th July.

Apart from the administrative responsibilities, Bakht Khan had to face the English enemy who were strongly entrenched on the Ridge. Bakht Khan deputed his men to intercept the supplies to the enemy's camp. On 14th July he succeeded in capturing three hundred horses and several cart loads of food grains which were on their way to the English Camp.

Bakht Khan in order to eject the English from their positions made an attempt on 9th July with a strong force supported by the jihadies and captured Tis Hazari (Spelt as Tehari Hazari) It appears that this was the first important success since the rebels occupied

3. Jasooson ke Khutut, National Archives, New Delhi, p. 5 (Here after cited as Jasooson Ke Khutut).
Delhi and it caused much jealousy to the Sepoys coming from Meerut and Neemuch, who supported different factions of the Princes.\textsuperscript{1} The attitude of the Princes was already unfriendly and the recent success of Bakht Khan appears to have made them more rigid in their attitude towards him. To retrieve the position Bakht Khan made some efforts to reconcile the sepoys and on his suggestions the King agreed to grant pensions to the wounded sepoys, and to assign lands for their subsistence.\textsuperscript{2}

Contemporary records and evidence indicate that Bakht Khan's endeavour to reform the administration hardly did anything to pacify the Princes and the conspirators.\textsuperscript{3} Mirza Mughal continuously ignored Bakht Khan's orders and poisoned the ears of the King. Probably upset over growing popularity of Bakht Khan and his own declining authority made him desperate and at one stage while Bakht Khan was waging a war against the English and trying to set right the administration of Delhi, Mirza Mughal asked the King to relieve Bakht Khan from his supreme military position.\textsuperscript{4} Bahadur Shah appears to have more apprehensions from his own son, Mirza Mughal, than Bakht Khan. Without responding to Mirza Mughal's request, Bahadur Shah showed great favours by sending petitions and publicly stating satisfaction with Bakht Khan's works.\textsuperscript{5}

It may be pointed out that Bakht Khan's battle with the English

\begin{enumerate}
\item Jasooson Ke Khutut, pp.5.
\item Zakaullah, p. 682; Metcalfe, p. 146.
\item Metcalfe, pp. 161-162; Nizami p. 87.
\item Jasooson Ke Khutut, pp. 9-10; Zakaullah, p. 682; Frederic Cooper, Crisis in Punjab, Chandigarh, 1977, p. 112. (hereafter cited as Cooper).
\item Metcalfe, pp. 160-167.
\end{enumerate}
at Tis Hazari was not decisive. The English still held their positions at different places to the very close proximity of the city such as Subzi Mandi, Alipur and Mubarak Bagh. Bakht Khan was keen to get these places vacated. However he found it difficult to achieve this task without the active and sincere support from other forces led by the commanders of Neemuch and Meerut Sepoys. The Neemuch contingent was trained by the English and had leaders like Sidhari Singh and Ghaus Khan. Unfortunately while their two leaders were committed to expel the English from the Indian soil, they extended no cooperation to Bakht Khan, kept themselves aloof and accused Bakht Khan of being complacent about the English. The attitude of these two great soldiers of the period appears to be a typical psychological case. Sidhari Singh and Ghaus Khan both were Subedar in the Bengal Army posted at Neemuch. Bakht Khan had also served at Neemuch as Subedar before being transferred to Bareily. The three had thus held the same position. However, Bakht Khan's spectacular rise to eminence and assignment of Supreme Command of the rebel forces, was supposed to be the cause of jealousy of Sidhari Singh and Ghaus Mohammad Khan. Consequently, the indifferent attitude of Sidhari Singh and Ghaus Mohammad Khan made it impossible to plan a joint action against the English. The delay in taking any action proved to be a boon for the English.1 Bahadur Shah had to intervene personally to forge reconciliation between Sidhari Singh

and Bakht Khan on 5th August after their failure to capture the English positions at Alipur, the Ridge and Muttali Bridge. Here it may be explained that Sidhari Singh was in the faction of Mirza Mughal and it is alleged that the Neemuch forces had given only a show of fight and deserted Bakht Khan high and dry. Sidhari singh also complained of Bakht Khan's relations with the English. Bahadur Shah again intervened and brought about a reconciliation.

Being desperate over the situation, Bakht khan decided to handle the great task of expelling the enemy from their positions single-handedly. He announced his plans to attack the enemy's position on 7th August but he could not do so due to heavy rains. The delay annoyed Bahadur Shah while Bakht Khan's opponents exploited the opportunity to defame him.

Administratively, the difficulties of Bakht Khan were increasing day by day. Differences with Sidhari Singh and Ghaus Khan, the two great fighters from Neemuch, and the financial difficulties were adding to the miseries of Bakht khan. Bahadur Shah's appeal to the neighbouring rulers for money proved to be ineffective. City bankers were the main suppliers of money. But they could not go beyond a limit in assisting the government without power and prospects of the return of their money with profit. Further, the attitude of the Princes had greatly horrified and annoyed them. Growing

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2 Ibid.
3 Metcalfe, p. 177.
factionalism within the army and conspiracies against Bakht Khan were adversely affecting the administration. The activities of Mirza Khizr Sutlan and other princes in collecting funds from bankers, ostensibly to pay the troops, were all the more disturbing. On the one hand, Mirza Khizr Sultan and the other princes forced the bankers to pay money for disbursement of payment to the troops causing great distress to the banking community, and on the other hand the troops were not paid salaries making them plunderer and creator of chaos. Although Bakht Khan had all the authority to punish the Princes yet he acted with caution to avoid an armed conflict with the forces supporting the princes and his own. In that complex situation he reported to the King that how the princes were collecting funds from various bankers. Bahadur Shah was greatly annoyed and ordered Mirza Khizr Sultan to surrender all the money he had realized. The bankers were also directed only to negotiate with Bakht Khan. It appears that the bankers also played a double game to save their money and obtain protection against the demanding Princes and Sepoys. When Bakht Khan approached them for money to meet the administrative expenses, he drew a blank. Hard pressed for money, Bakht khan ordered for confining Devi Singh and Salik Ram, the two leading bankers in Delhi. He got only a sum of rupees six thousand.

To what extent Delhi was plagued with the intriguing elements against Bakht Khan, may be discerned from the incident of 20th August 1857. Taleyar Khan and Gauri Shanker, a spy of the English,
produced one Sikh witness to the King alleging that Bakht Khan was secretly communicating with the English. It may be pointed out that Gauri Shankar belonged to the Neemuch contingent. The Sikh witness thus produced by the intriguers was examined personally by Bahadur Shah, and he came to the conclusion that he was an enemy's agent. However, Bakht Khan, considered it essential to clear his position before the army. On 23rd August he made a public statement where all the principal military officers including Mirza Mughal were present.¹

The presence of the English army which had occupied strategic position on the northern side of the city was worrying. Bakht Khan had planned on 21st August to launch a joint military campaign against them. It could not materialize due to mutual discords. Mirza Mughal was already unhappy with Bakht Khan for his spectacular rise to prominence, exploited this situation and blamed Bakht Khan for this failure. He also pleaded to the King to disarm the Bareily contingent and banned the entry of Bakht Khan to the Palace. Bahadur Shah, though old and powerless, still possessed considerable intelligence to see the game of Mirza Mughal in such a ploy. Mirza Mughal was becoming increasingly powerful day by day as Neemuch contingent was at his back. Bahadur Shah was thus concerned about his own safety at that time.² The position of the King at that time was such that he had to deal with the English enemies on the outskirts of Delhi

¹ Metcalfe, pp 200-205
² Ibid pp 205-6
and his own kith and kin within the palace who, unthoughtful of the consequences of that game, were busy in their nefarious activities.

Subsequent events in Delhi and formation of Court of administration, however, indicate that Bahadur Shah still held Bakht Khan in full confidence. The formation of the Court of Administration appears to have been made with a dual object. First to contain the Princes and their supporters and to introduce effective administration in Delhi to cope with the extant situation. Thus, he appointed a Court of Administration consisting of ten members, four to be appointed by the King and six by the army. The composition of the Court, as would be seen, was neither purely Indian nor western in character. The Court was to act on the basis of a written 12 point programme. According to this programme, the court was to consist of ten members. Of them two were to be elected from each of the three wings of the army that is infantry, cavalry and artillery. It would be seen that representation to all the three wings of army were given on equal basis. Obviously, this was to keep the entire rebel army under control. Further, Court was to have a president (*Sadr-i-jalsa*) and a vice president (*Naib Sadr*) who had the authority to nominate one member each. The president had the right of casting the vote (literally two votes) and had a clear edge over other members including the Vice-president. The Court was to function selflessly for the welfare of

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1 *Press List of Mutiny Papers,* No. 539-40. Here it may be mentioned that Sen suggests that the Court of Administration was formed, in May 1857 see 1857, p.75; Mahdi Hasan also suggests that the Court of Administration was formed probably in May 1857, See *Bahadur Shah and the War of 1857 in Delhi,* Delhi, 1958, pp. 182-89; Spear, p.206, says it was formed in July; Zakaullah refers to its formation without citing a date.
the people and the state. It was to work under the care of Commander-
in-Chief. All decisions were subject to his assent. In case of
disagreement on any issue the decision of *Sadr-i-jalas* (read Bahadur Shah) was to be considered final and binding upon all. All the decisions concerning the civil and military affairs were to be taken by majority of votes. The Court thus clearly represented the influence of the English constitutional ideas and to some extent introduces democratic functioning in the army.

Subsequent events indicate that the well intentioned formation of Court of Administration remained only on paper. It could hardly become a successful device to check the uncontrollable Princes. Mirza Mughal continued to interfere in the affairs of the Court and violated its orders.

The Court was to hold two kinds of sessions, ordinary sessions for four hours each day in Red Fort and special sessions at any time in the night and day as the situation demanded. Bakht Khan was required to be present at all meetings of the Court including Bahadur Shah himself. In case of a deadlock in taking a decision at the Court, the Kings decision was to be considered final. The Court was to be supported by the committees. Each committee was to have a Secretary which was to be formed under the aegies of the Court of each regiment of the army. It is sad to note that the continuous differences between

2. The Urdu text of the Constitution of the Court is reproduced in Sen, 1857, pp. 74-75; Mahdi Hasan between the pages 182-183 and Rizvi pp. 9-13 appendix-II Sauatantra Dilli 1857.
the Neemuch and Bareily contingents rendered the Court of Administration ineffective. Thus Bahadur Shah's another effort to keep the leading sepoy leaders united did not succeed.

While the differences between the Neemuch and Bareily contingents unresolved, their object remained one, that is to overthrow the English from India. On 24th August in order to fulfill their common object, the Neemuch and Bareily forces marched separately towards Alipur via Najafgarh with an object to expel the English forces. Their common aim was to attack the English positions on the Ridge. Unfortunately, neither of the two had a common plan of action, and common coordination was still a dream. However, Bakht Khan realized that such independent action against the English army was fraught with danger and he suggested the Neemuch contingent leaders for a joint action against the enemy. His suggestion was ignored and the Neemuch contingent was routed.2

The rout of Neemuch contingent appears to have demoralised Bakht Khan and he turned to Delhi without risking his own forces against the enemy's fire. As usual Mirza Mughal and Neemuch leaders made loud complaints to Bahadur Shah alleging that the defeat was caused by the inaction of Bakht Khan.3 Continuous accusations made Bakht Khan considerably demoralised. He resolved to keep himself aloof. Bahadur Shah once again came to assuage

2. Metcalfe, pp. 207-8, The Author of Dastan-i-Ghadar however says that the Neemuch Force was sandwiched between the English forces and Bakht Khan's contingent. Zaheer pp. 142-143.
his feelings and persuaded him to work as usual.¹

The continuing differences among the rebel leaders in Delhi were the greatest enemy to the cause of expelling the English. These conflicts eventually weakened the rebels in Delhi and none of the factions operating there was in a position to foil counter English attack on Delhi. Further, prevelance of disorder in Delhi shattered the trade and commerce which was virtually in the shambles. It may be inferred from one of the joint petitions filed by Haider Baksh, Haji Maula Baksh and 15 others to Bahadur Shah. The leading traders of Delhi represented that due to the rebellion, they were suffering from heavy losses, their trade with places like Kanpur, Banaras, Calcutta, Ambala Lahore etc. had already been ruined making them penniless. To add to their miseries Mirza Mughal was demanding rupees fifty thousand from them. Being in a poor condition, they expressed their inability to fulfill the demand and consequently Mirza Mughal placed guards on their houses blocking their movements to the extent that they were not allowed to offer even their Eid prayers.²

Even after the issuance of clear orders by Bakht Khan, the people of Delhi specially the rich people did not have a respite from the exacting demands of the Princes and their coetries. Ramjimal, Saadat Ali, Agha Jaan and Zorawar Chand were being squeezed for money on 28th August. The demand was that each one of them must pay

¹. Metcalfe, p. 212.
rupees one Lakh, and to make payment sure their food and water supplies were stopped.\textsuperscript{1} Ironically, Bakht Khan's position was so precarious that he could not intervene to force the Princes for an orderly behaviour due to their underhand intrigues. General Sidhvari Singh being the right hand man of Mirza Mughal and his patron's hostile attitude towards Bakht Khan, kept the army divided\textsuperscript{2}. Again the rebel army in Delhi was further weakened due to the conflict between the Sikh soldiers and the Sepoys mostly from Uttar Pradesh and Western Bihar.\textsuperscript{3}

By the end of August several attempts were made to maintain law and order in the city of Delhi through making reforms in administration and by transfer and adjustment of power of the Princes and Bakht Khan. As has already been stated, with the formation of the Court and also by virtue of descent Bahadur Shah was in supreme command of authority but in practice he was powerless, Bakht Khan's orders were being flouted openly and attempts for reforming administration of Delhi through maintaining law and order was a distinct failure as may be seen from a petition sent by the members of the Court to Bahadur Shah urging upon him to direct the Princes not to violate the Court's orders in future.\textsuperscript{4}

It would be seen that the Princes had become a problem and all the efforts made by Bahadur Shah, the Court and Bakht Khan to restore

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\textsuperscript{1} Press List of Mutiny Paper, No. 166/377.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid. No.19, S.No. 5.
\textsuperscript{3} Metcalfe, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{4} Press List of Mutiny of Papers, No. 57, S.No.352.
a semblance of administration and introduce reforms were foiled by them. The interest of the Princes dominated over the interest of the newly acquired independence by the rebel leaders in Delhi at a time when the English forces were still looming large and had entrenched themselves on the outskirts of Delhi. Unfortunately, Bakht Khan's talents in maintaining law and order in Delhi and to fight against the English at the outskirts could not be fully utilized due to the intriguing qualities of the princes. Much of the time of Bakht Khan was lost in checkmating the Princes' intrigues. Admittedly Bakht Khan enjoyed absolute power to deal with the Princes but he could not use it properly keeping in view the larger interest of the soldiers who could be thrown into the vortex of mutual blood shed. In Delhi the rebel administration thus did not bring any relief to the people until it was reconquered by the English in September 1857.