Chapter- 5

DELHI DURING 1857

With the termination of English rule in Delhi on 11th May 1857, there was no dearth of such people who were still aspiring to reestablish the foreigner's rule and thus they indulged in conspiracies. There is no doubt that the uprising of 1857 against the alien rule was due to the combined and united efforts of the Hindus and Muslims. Sustenance of independence acquired so abruptly by the rebels needed a good organisation run by both the Hindus and Muslims. Its collapse was bound to allow the English re-entry. The English relied much on their agents living in Delhi creating a bad blood between the Hindus and Muslims. But it was their misfortune that the Mughal King Bahadur Shah still enjoyed great love of people and had considerable influence on them, as is evident from the developments during the course of rebellion and peoples' reaction. Everywhere in North India including Delhi, people regarded Bahadur Shah Zafar as their sovereign and raised as slogan as, "People of God, Country of the king and orders of ....... Bahadur Shah and so on." The Mughal King succeeded in maintaining communal harmony in Delhi despite the activities of disruptive forces till the re-conquest of Delhi by the English.

As is known, the majority of the Muslims were actively involved

in the rebellion of 1857. In Delhi on 19th May, 1857 the Muslims raised the cry of *jihad* from the Jama Masjid. Bahadur Shah did not approve the calling of the struggle against the English in the name of religion. To him the struggle was not religious. He apprehended that such slogans were bound to exasperate the Hindus.\(^1\) Again on 20th May, Bahadur Shah refused to consider Maulvi Mohammad Saeed's request that the holy war had been declared for the purpose of inflaming the minds of Muslims against the Hindus. Bahadur Shah termed this step as a folly specially when most of the Sepoys were Hindus. He warned that such an act would lead to an internecine war regrettable results. He also pointed out that the Hindus were leaning towards an alliance with the English and had no sympathy with the Muslims.\(^2\) Such remarks from Bahadur Shah were in true tradition of the ruling Mughal dynasty which did not discriminate among the people on religious basis. Like the Muslims, a group of Hindus also arrived to lodge complaint that a war against Hindus was being preached. Bahadur Shah clearly stated the fight was against English, adding that his orders exist forbidding to direct the fight against the Hindus.\(^3\) Apprehending that the endeavours by the pro-English elements to create a wedge between Hindus and Muslims might cause disunity, Bahadur Shah issued a proclamation on 21th May by beat of drum that Hindus and Muslims must not quarrel.\(^4\)

---

1. Metcalfe, p. 98.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. p. 100.
Bahadur Shah's endeavours in maintaining unity among the Hindus and Muslims might have made clear impression on his opponents that creation of wedge between the Hindus and Muslims was not easy. At the same time, saner elements among the Hindus and Muslims belonging to various classes such as the Maulvis and Pandits propagated through newspapers the necessity of an organisation. Their propaganda helped in maintaining unity among the Hindus and Muslims as may be discerned from Zakaullah's following statement, "The enemity against the English was entertained both by the Pandits and Maulvis. On several occasions after going through their papers (Patras), they predicted the auspicious time to the telangas, assured them that if they went to fight on that particular auspicious hour they would be victorious. The Sepoys fought desperately on such predicted auspicious hour. The Pandits assured the telangas (Sepoys) that the English rule would not be restablished. Rather it would be the rule of the rebels that would be eventually established. A strange scene used to be witnessed in the Chandni Chowk and other markets that holding their Pathis the Pandits were giving orders to the Sepoys according to the Dharam Shashtra that they should fight against the English (Malichh). When the Sepoy's dead bodies were brought from the battle grounds on the charpais they used to direct the Hindus to send away these people of heaven with respect as they neither required any religious rituals nor funeral." 1 Among the Muslims, the Maulvis were taking leading role during the rebellion. They

1. Zakaullah, p. 676.
issued religious decrees (*Fatwa*) and persuaded the Muslims to fight for the destruction of the English Government. The *ulema* also became very active and delivered speeches assuring the rebels that they were invincible and that none could cause any harm to them nor could kill them. People began to reveal their own dreams predicting the successes of the rebels. The *Delhi Urdu Akhbar* thus reported on 24th May, 1857 (an old man is seen in dream as if Prophet Mohammad was saying to Christ that your followers (*Ummat*) have raised their heads too much and have become an enemy to me and want to destroy my religion. Christ replied that they are not my followers. They are not following me or my teachings. They are the followers of Satan. Then Prophet Mohammad said the last word. Thereafter Christ presented the sword to the Prophet and said that the sword had been presented to him and hence being given. Prophet Mohammad replied, give it to 'Ali, when he was giving the sword to him, he said give it to Husain. And at the last the sword was given to him.)

Gossips with a view to strengthen the unity among the Hindus and Muslims also appear to have constituted a routine part of propaganda in Delhi. The *Delhi Urdu Akhbar* in its issue of 24th May, reported peoples' talking about the appearance of unknown fighters riding on female camels wearing green dresses on the day

---

1 *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*, 24th May, 1857.
when the rebels entered Delhi. Whoever could lay hands on an English killed him without hesitation.

Delhi became a centre of the followers of Syed Ahmad Barelvi who had initiated a religious war in 1826-27 in the frontier region. As has already been discussed, he died at 1831 at Balakot but his mission was carried by his followers despite English persecution and suppression. The network which Syed Ahmad Barelvi had built throughout the length and breadth of Indian subcontinent, had numerous centres working on his ideology. To defame them the English bureaucrats coined the term Wahabi to create a wedge among the Sunni Muslims in India. The followers of Syed Ahmad Barelvi believed in expelling the English from Indian soil at all cost. Hence in 1857 when the rebellion broke out, a large number of them became active in different parts of the country. In Delhi too they began to pour in as Bakht Khan patronised them. Their number began to swell with the constant efforts by the ulama. Zakaullah, the Urdu Historian, sneeringly says that with the arrival of Bakht Khan the cry of jihad against the English became louder. The jihahids came to Delhi from places like Hansi, Hissar, Tonk, Bhopal, Bareilly, etc. Intrestingly almost all these places had considerable Rohilla Afghan population. The Rohilla Afghans were largely under the influence of Maulvis Abdul Ghafoor, Sarfaraz Ali, Imam Khan Risaldar, and Ghaus

1 Zakaullah, pp 675-6
Mohammad Khan. The so called Wahabis came from the poor classes of Muslim community such as weavers, artisans and other wage earners. Zakaullah describes them as illdressed, ill-fed and hungry people who lived on the charity of the rich in Delhi.¹ These so called Wahabis did not receive any salary from the government established by the rebels. They fought with the English with their conventional weapons such as swords, daggers, spears etc. Here again Zakaullah may be quoted by way of illustration, "In Delhi when the highest authorities of the rebel forces, Bakht Khan, Ghaus Mohammad Khan and Imam Khan Risaldar assembled and with them arrived Maulvi Abdul Ghaffar and Maulvi Sarfraz Ali, then there was a great assembly of the Wahabis in Delhi. Maulvi Sarfaraz Ali became the Commander-in-Chief of the Wahabis and Bakht Khan became their supporter. The jihadis came from Jaipur, Hansi, Hissar, and Tonk. Three hundred to four hundred jihadis were thus assembled. These jihadis issued a proclamation addressed to the Muslims to take up arms for jihad. Most of the jihadis were hunger striken. They were also not having proper dresses on their bodies but they possessed a sword and a dagger in their vest and a muzzle loading gun on their shoulders.²" Sneering for their economic condition and the support of the people, Zakaullah writes, "..... when the jihadis appealed to the King that they were dying of hunger, then he used to say that there was no money in the treasury but he arranged that the city people brought them breads for the sake of sawab (religious benefit). Nawab

¹ Zakaullah, p. 675
² Ibid
Mohiuddin Khan alias Buddhe Saheb gave them two thousand rupees. The Muslims of the city joined them in a very small number. One Mohammad Sharif, the leading artist of Delhi, donated his entire property including house, and the ornaments of his wife to the jihadis and also joined their ranks.

Sen, however, alleges that the jihadis became a source of embarrassment to the King and his ministers. Their services could not be declined and at the same time the demand of the declaration of jihad against the English could not be encouraged. However, Sen misses the point that the jihadis were a close ally of Bakht Khan, and who had been under constant pressure of acrimonies and intrigues by the ministers specially Mirza Mughal. Indeed the section of (the jihadis pressurised the King as has already been discussed in the previous chapter ) of jihadis did pressurise Bahadur Shah to declare the fight against the English a jihad which he declined on the grounds that it would give a wrong signal to the Sepoys, majority of whom consisted of Hindus. It can thus be seen that Bahadur Shah avoided a communal strife which could have largely benifitted the enemies.

One of the hallmarks of the rebellion of 1857 in Delhi was the unprecedented unity among the Hindus and Muslims. This phenomenon was not confined to Delhi alone. This was also seen in Jhansi, Lucknow and Bareilly. Everywhere the rebels had issued

2. Ibid.
3. 1857, Sen, pp. 92-93.
proclamations laying emphasis on the unity among the Hindus and Musalmans. In Delhi Bahadur Shah also issued a proclamation. For example these proclamations laid emphasis on the following points. (a) cruelty and misbehaviour of the Kafirs (English).  
(b) United defence of the religions of the Hindus and Muslims.  
(c) extermination of English rule from India by all means. Then Birjis Qadr's assertion, "All the Hindus and Muslims know that four things are extremely dear to every human being that is (a) Deen and Dharam (b) honour and respect (c) life and his own family members (d) property and other belongings." In Awadh a Urdu Pamphlete Risala-e-Fateh Islam describing the English cruelties against the people refers to them as Pharaos. Similarly, Feroz Shah's proclamation of 25th August 1857 generally believed to have been issued by Bahadur Shah also lays emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity. In almost all the proclamations issued by the rebel leaders emphasis was given on unity for the protection of Deen and Dharam which was in danger under the English rule. Apprehension about the danger to the religion of Hindus and Muslims was not without foundation. Even the loyalists like Syed Ahmad Khan and the author of Zafar Nama endorsed it. Most

2. Birjis Qadr's Proclamation, Foreign Political proceedings, 30th Dec. 1859, No. 1693, NAI. pp. 615-17.  
of the proclamations laid emphasis upon the Hindus and Muslims calling upon them to unite for the protection of their religions. This emphasis is understandable in view of the fact that the Bengal army consisted of upper caste recruits especially the Rajputs, Brahmins, Syeds, Shaikhs and Pathans,¹ who were extremely orthodox and religious.

In order to keep the Hindus and Muslims united and to fight against the English resolutely the ulema and Pandits began to preach that the rebels were invincible and they were bound to destroy the English.² The newspapers in Delhi also played an important role and published articles to incite the sentiments of the rebels against the English. The attitude of the Press was so encouraging that through the publications they prevented the rebel Sepoys from disintegration when the English pressure began to mount. For example the Delhi Urdu Akhbar wrote, "God is all powerful. O'countrymen the intelligence of the English, trade, good administration and the expansion of their government and wealth, treasury and income and expenses have probably disheartened you as to how such a big government can be destroyed in such a short time. But the Muslims and Hindus all should enlighten their hearts with their faith (Iman) and knowledge obtaining inspiration from their religions...... There is none who enjoys absolute power and eternal life except God. Study your religious books as to how in this very Hindustan big Governments rose to power and declined. The Ravana, the ruler of Cylone, kept the army

² Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 24th May, 1857.
of Rakshasas with him. So far so that once he defeated the army of Raja Ram Chandra who was a Surya Vanshi but soon with the help of the army of the forest people (tribals) Raja Ram Chandra destroyed him and his army. Kans, the ruler of Mathura, became so powerful that he conquered the world and began to aspire the conquest of Inderlok. In the family of Yadavas and Sursen Shri Krishna Maharaj was born who eliminated the enemies in such a way that their names are no more found. Besides, how far the families of Chattris were brave and courageous and considered themselves to be equals of Brahmins. Look at the Gods' play that how Pershuram Raja destroyed them. Thus when you see that how big Rajas after sometime are destroyed by other caste people then how do you not understand that God has arranged through his absolute powers evidently that that nation which has established its power for the last one hundred years and treating the people of God with contempt and calls your kith and kins blackman (Kala Aadmi). God has shown his game. Generally it is seen that due to this anxiety and grief your routine has become disorderly. May God grant you power and satisfaction. It is imperative for you to eradicate fear from your hearts and not to flee abandoning the city with fear and despondency. It is to degenerate power of God. O' dear brothers if you are anxious in this war and do any work with satisfaction or are afraid and tremble with fear of them, you are bound to be called sinners. This is the sign of weakness of your faith. You possess two hands, your opponents have also the same. Everyone of you is a brave person who is like
a lion. For the enemies, they are hundred to one thousand numerically. Oh brave Sepoys! Oh brave and lion hearted telangas, as in the ancient history the achievements of braves are memorable, for example in the ancient history of India the Yaduvanshi Bhim and Arjun are memorable, in the history of Faras (Iran) Rustam, Sam and among the Muslims states Amir Taimur, Halaku and Nadir Shah are famous and encouraged people, similarly yours this war would be recorded in history that how you fought bravely with such a powerful and proud people breaking their pride. The government which big rulers could not take over has been captured by you." In the same way the Delhi Urdu Akhbar in its issue of 21st June, published the news that how God has removed the fears of the English from the hearts of their servants and thrown the entire army and treasury to the feet of the King, then do you not believe in the power of Almighty God? You should not be fearful of the continuous gunfire of the white people. No one dies before his appointed time. If the white people capture one or two of your guns you should not worry. You should see that how they fire thousand times but by the grace of God except for few persons none is harmed.

On 19th July, the Delhi Urdu Akhbar wrote with a view to incite them against the English." O' brothers, countrymen, specially for the army men it is essential that Hindus and Muslims unite and become one, should understand one another as their arms. For the destruction of this group of people (English) make complete

1 Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 14th June, 1857
2 Ibid 21st June, 1857. Also see Zakaullah, p 701 for his pro-English account
endeavour and don't take rest until they are completely routed.

Though many people were striving to form a Hindu Muslim organisation Bahadur Shah Zafar, however, was the symbol of unity. The King had complete faith in a united front, despite having been disappointed by the results of armed conflicts on 12th September, when the politics of the white and their diplomatic arms dominated. The unity among the Hindu and Muslims appeared to have weakened. Now the Muslims accused Hindus and Hindus accused Muslims at a time when the freedom struggle in Delhi was taking its last breath. Bahadur Shah made proclamation that he would lead a combined army of Hindus and Muslims and go to the battle field personally. Unfortunately, this could not happen due to a successful attack by the English forces on Delhi.

How British diplomacy was successful in Delhi to disunite Hindus and Muslims may be understood from their propaganda through press. In order to make Muslims antagonistic against the Hindus and to win the support of the latter they published an advertisement declaring that their war against English was unlawful. They incited the Muslims that they had been misguided by the Hindu Sepoys as they were fools. The advertisement further stated that the cartridges had the fat of cows and other slaughtered animals as the government intended to wage a war against Russia and Iran. On the occasion of its distribution of the Hindus objected that "They want to give

---

1 Metcalfe, p. 229.
us the cartridges made of cow fats and to the Muslims made of pig fats. The Army which is foolish, revolted and made a hue and cry. It also misguided the people. Therefore from the city people you should be alert. Our foremost object is to punish the Hindu army and those who support them or help them, would also be punished. It is incumbent upon you to follow according to shariat and kill the Hindus."

Appearance of such poster made the ulema alert in Delhi. They concluded that it was an effort by British diplomats to divide the Hindus and Muslims and to weaken the unity of the rebels to serve their purpose. Immediately after the publication of this pamphlet, they countered it by publishing the famous pamphlet Radd-i-Ishtihar-i- Nasara (refutation of Christian advertisement). In this pamphlet, the ulema argued for a common platform quoting numerous examples of deceit and fraud committed by the English; the proof of such deceits were the states of Nagpur, Jhansi etc.

Another important event in Delhi during the short period of rebels' rule was the attempt of forging unity by disallowing cow slaughter. The credit for this endeavour goes to a galaxy of the persons who were assembled at Delhi determined to uproot the English rule. Their attempt was to revive the old days of religious unity and tolerance that existed during the reign of Akbar and was based upon the policy of sulh-i kul. By throwing the English rule from India, their object was to create a strong determined united

1. Delhi Urdu Akhbar, 5th July, 1857.
Indian nation. Among these leading persons was Maulana Fazle Haq Khairabadi, whose scholarship was acknowledged even outside India. Zakauallah tells us that he prepared a constitution for the government of Bahadur Shah and its first clause was to ban cow slaughter throughout the Kingdom.¹ Consequently, Bahadur Shah issued order to General Bakht Khan, the Sepoys and the officers of the army that there should be no cow slaughter on the eve of Baqar-Id. The order gave stern warning to the Muslims that violation of this could lead to their death by blowing them away by the mouth of guns. It also warned that even if any one encouraged the cow slaughter, he could be given the penalty. Bakht Khan enforced this order². Hakim Ahsanullah Khan objected to this order and expressed his unhappiness.³ One of the witnesses in the trial case of Bahadur Shah, Mrs. Aldwell, told the trial court "I think when the troops first came, the Hindus made the King promise that there should be no oxen killed in the city, and this promise was kept. I believe that not a single ox was killed in Delhi during the whole time of the rebellion. On the festival of Bakr-Eed, when the Mohamedans usually slaughter an ox, a disturbance was expected; but the Mohamedans refrained from doing so on this occasion."⁴ Zakaullah, a English loyalist sees this order in a different way. He says that Bahadur Shah issued his first order and that was the prohibition of cow slaughter. On 9th July proclamations were made through the beat of drums that who ever would be found

¹. Zakaullah, p. 687.
². Metcalfe, p. 170.
³. Ibid.
⁴. Garrett, p. 158.
guilty of cow slaughter would be blown away through the mouth of guns. Thus Bahadur Shah acted to please the Hindu Sepoys as he was helpless in their hands. Needless to say that Zakauullah the Urdu historian, who was later on given the title of Khan Bahadur by the English, was one of the great supporters of them. Zakauullah forgot that in that situation no sane person could afford any strife among the Sepoys on the issue of cow slaughter. Moreover, he also forgot that Bahadur Shah was not entirely in the hands of the Hindu Sepoys as it was Bakht Khan who was heading the administration with absolute power transferred to him by the King to run the administration and it was he who enforced the order of prohibition of cow slaughter. Maulvi Zakauallah also ignored Maulana Fazle-Haq who was the architect of the policy of religious toleration, co-existence and mutual trust. The brave Maulana even after the fall of Delhi, stood by his principles and for his activities he was prosecuted and given a life term. He was imprisoned in Andaman Nichobar Island. He was not affected even by the apposition of such men as Hakim Ahsanullah Khan.

Similarly, Syed Qutb, a leading man of Bareilly and supporter of the rebels against the English, published a number of proclamations which laid emphasis on unity among the Hindus and Muslims.

It would be interesting to study various orders issued in the name of Bahadur Shah from Delhi during the period of rebellion.

On 28th July an order was issued prohibiting the cow slaughter completely. According to Emperor's orders, it is directed that no Musalman should sacrifice cow in the city on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. If any one violates this order, he would be punished. The English intelligence immediately attempted to exploit the situation and began to provoke the Muslims against the prohibition of cow slaughter. The contemporary newspapers, however, indicate that the English could not succeed in their attempt. The prohibition orders were very clear. I quote "The people of God, the country of the King and order of the chief of the army (read Bakht Khan), whoever during this festival of Baqre Eid or prior or after it sacrifices cow, oxen, calf or she calf, bufallo or she bufallo secretly in his house he would be regarded as enemy of the Emperor and he would be put to death and who ever falsely makes allegations after inquiry by the court and if the allegation is proved to be correct the offenders would be punished otherwise who makes allegation would be given death punishment." Bahadur Shah in order to ensure that his proclamation banning the cow slaughter is fully enforced, a subsequent order was issued that the traders in animal trade specially the cow, oxen, buffaloes were forbidden to bring animals to the city for six days. The police officials were directed to count the cows maintained by the Muslims and bring them to Kotwali for safety until the festival was over. Even at the cost of space and time, this order deserve to be reproduced here for the benefit of posterity. This order is

1. Press List of Mutiny Papers, No. 111 (e) 31, National Archives, New Delhi.
addressed to the Kotwal of Delhi, Mubarak Shah. It reads, "Soon after the receipt of the royal order you should announce through the beat of drums that the slaughter and sacrifice of cow have been completely forbidden, hence it is written to you now to make such arrangements at the gates of the city that not a single trader in cow trade enters the city from today till the three days of the Baqre Eid. This should also apply to the sellers of buffaloes and wherever the Muslims are keeping cows in their houses they should be brought to the Kotwali and cows should be protected. If anyone openly or secretly slaughters the domesticated cows in his house, he would be given death punishment. On the occasion of Eid-ul-azha on the issue of cow slaughter such arrangements must be made that the cows are not even available for sale and the domesticated cows are also not slaughtered. What ever endeavour is made from the Kotwali in this regard that would please us".1 The orders issued on 29th July, 1857 shows the extent of anxiety of Bahadur Shah on this issue. He did not even care that such an order was bound to effect the sources of livelihood of a section of people. The entry of cows into the city could be stopped at various points of the city but it could not be a total success. Some of the leading Muslims raised this issue before Bahadur Shah that bringing all the cows from the houses of the Muslims to the Kotwali was extremely difficult. They thus suggested that the Muslims be allowed to keep their cows at their houses after their signing a muchalka (guarantee or security)2.

1 Press List of Mutiny Papers, No. 111 (c) 43.  
2 Ibid. No. 111 (c) 44.
Consequently, a subsequent order was issued to the Muslims of the city for submitting their *muchalka* and for the preparation of the list of cows maintained by them. The commander-in-Chief of the army (Bakht Khan) also wrote a letter to the *Kotwal* of the city to honour the orders of the Emperor in letter and spirit so far as the prohibition of cow slaughter was concerned. He also emphasised that the cows kept at the houses of the Muslims should be protected for three days from being slaughtered.¹

These rigid orders indicate that Bahadur Shah and Bakht Khan were keen to maintain communal harmony and law and order and were not prepared to allow any disorder on this issue. Ather Abbas Rizvi is perhaps right that it may be admitted that to what extent the Muslims were generous and how far they respected and loved the Hindus that they allowed to detach themselves from the cow slaughter to keep their Hindu brothers happy.² It appears that Bahadur Shah's order of cow slaughter was not temporary. He was contemplating to enforce this order permanently as it was suggested that those involved in cow slaughter trade should turn themselves to goat and its meat trade.³

---

¹ *Press List of Mutiny Papers*, No. 102,103,; Also see No. 120,144.
² *Sautantra Dilli*, p. 113.
³ Ibid No. 111,45.