

Politico-Administrative Developments in the Deccan Under Shahjahan



History

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ABSTRACT

In the present paper an attempt has been made to analyse the political and administrative developments in the Deccan under the Emperor Shahjahan (1628-1658 A.D). The paper has been divided into two sections the first part deals with the political developments while the administration has been discussed in the second section. The Deccan however a different entity from that of the North India but attempts had always been made by the rulers to conquer it whether it was the Sultanate period or the Mughal rule. With the coming of the Mughals in the Deccan, the politico-administrative conditions of the Deccan had underwent certain changes according to the need of the time and in this paper I tried to discuss what has happened in the Deccan under Shahjahan.

(I) The Political Scene:

The Deccan literally means the southern and peninsular part of the great landmass of India. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* mention it as *Dakshinapath*. In describing this area the author of *Periplus* also calls it *Dakshinabades*. In the *Markandya*, *Vayu* and *Matsya Puranas* the term *Dakshina* or *Dakshinapath* also denotes the whole peninsular south of the *Narmada*. *Rajshekhara* (c. 11th century) states that *Dakshinapath* or *Dakshinadesa* is the portion of the Indian peninsula lying to the south of *Mahishmati*.¹

The Imperial Gazetteer of India defines the Deccan that it "includes in its widest sense the whole of peninsular India lying south of the *Vindhya* mountains and the *Narmada* river which separate it from the North."²

The Geographical limits of the Deccan are defined by the *Deccan History Conference*, "The Deccan shall be deemed to mean the region from the *Tapti* in the North to the edge of the plateau in the South and from sea to sea."³

Only at one place the author of *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* use the term in the comprehensive Geographical sense, when in the introduction to his history, he personifies India as *Hind* and says, "Dakhan the son of *Hind* had three sons and the country of Dakhan was divided among them. Their names are *Marath*, *Kanhar*, and *Tilang*". At present these races reside in the Deccan.⁴ On the other places in his history, *Ferishta* like other Persian writers uses the term Deccan to indicate Bahmani Deccan.

As far as the Modern Historians are concerned they generally treated the Deccan as a Geographical entity so far separated from northern India, the Delhi Sultans and the Mughals in order to extend their frontiers beyond the *Vindhyas* have been looked upon as over ambitious.⁵

M. Athar Ali in his '*Nobility under Aurangzeb*', argued that the Deccan presented a sharp contrast to northern India, where the Mughal conquest has been as quickly consolidated as they were made. There were geographical reasons as the hills there made transport difficult and did not allow great fortresses to be built, which may be held partially responsible for the slowness of the Mughal progress in the Deccan.⁶

In spite of all the difficulties, the Deccan had always been an important possession for the Mughals. *Jadunath Sarkar* calls the Mughal expansion into the Deccan as 'a sleepless aim of the Mughal Emperors'.⁷ Thus Deccan occupied an important place in the History of Mughal Empire in India from the very beginning.

By the 1590's Akbar's empire included almost the whole of northern India with the exception of some parts of Bengal. Now it was natural for the Mughal arms to turn in the direction of the Deccan. Akbar annexed Berar by 1596 and Khandesh by 1601.⁸

⁸ Ahmadnagar too was formally seized but its actual assimilation had only progressed partially after Akbar's death.⁹

The pre-occupation of Jahangir in internal affairs after his accession, failure of Mughal arms in the Deccan and the successes of, Malik Ambar¹⁰ led Bijapur, the largest and best organized state in the Deccan to change its attitude towards the Mughals. Ibrahim Adil Shah decided to ally himself with Malik Ambar in trying to expel the Mughals from the territories they had seized in Ahmadnagar.¹¹

Jahangir's main objective in the Deccan was the maintenance of Akbar's settlement of 1600.¹² After the death of Malik Ambar (1626), the struggle between the Mughals and the *Nizam Shahi* nobles had ceased for some time.¹³

When Shahjahan ascended the throne on 29th January 1628, his first concern as emperor was to recover the territories lost to the Nizam Shah which included Balaghat and adjoining territories surrendered to the Nizam Shahi authorities by Khan-i-Jahan Lodhi towards the last days of Jahangir's reign. Khan-i-Jahan Lodhi's rebellion (1629) and subsequently his being given shelter by Burhan Nizam Shah III was an additional setback for the Mughals.¹⁴

Burhan Nizam Shah III also secured military assistance from the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda. On coming to the throne Shahjahan therefore began his diplomatic moves to isolate Nizam Shahis from the other two Deccani Kingdoms. He sent two brothers, Shaikh Muinuddin and Shaikh Muhiuddin, as envoys to Bijapur and Golconda respectively.¹⁵

Shahjahan appointed Iradat Khan entitled Azam Khan, as the new Subedar. He deputed a well equipped army to pursue Khan-i-Jahan Lodhi¹⁶ who was killed in a struggle at Sihonda on January 26th, 1631.¹⁷ During this time Shahjahan's diplomatic mission to Bijapur proved to be a futile exercise. But soon the reign of Shahjahan saw two major bursts of expansion. Between 1632-6 almost the entire Ahmadnagar kingdom was annexed, though its southern parts were ceded to Bijapur. In 1656-7 came the second burst with the district of Ramgir taken from Golconda, and large portions (including Bidar and Parend) seized from Bijapur.

When the situation was not improved, Shahjahan decided to proceed to Deccan personally and reached Burhanpur in February 1630.¹⁸ Shahjahan's well planned and well executed military operations soon had the desired effect on the rulers of Golconda and Bijapur. First Abdullah Qutb Shah compelled with the dictates of Shahjahan in April 1636.¹⁹ Soon after him, Muhammad Abul Shah of Bijapur also followed suit by agreeing to a formal settlement with the Mughals in May 1636.²⁰

The terms of the treaty were that Adil Shah had to recognize the Mughal sovereignty, to pay two millions of rupees as peace offering, to maintain peace with Golconda, and to submit it to the emperor's arbitration as regards to his quarrel with Qutb Shah. Further Shahjahan defined the boundaries of Bijapur, and assigned a part of the Nizamshahi territories to the Adilshahis. And finally each side undertook not to reduce the officers of the

other from their master's side, and Adil shah agreed to cooperate with the Mughals in reducing Shahji, the Maratha Sardar to Submission.²¹

After the settlement of 1636, Aurangzeb was appointed Subedar of the Deccan, thus the peace between the Mughals and the Deccan states resulting from the settlement of 1636 continued for about twenty years. Hence no forceful military demonstrations were held on the Mughal frontier in the Deccan during 1636-56.²²

H.K. Sherwani however argues that the Mughals were not able to make any further military move for checking the southward expansion of Bijapur and Golconda as there were frequent changes of 'Viceroys' particularly after 1644. As many as five 'Viceroys' were successively appointed between 1644-1652 According to him, owing to administrative uncertainty caused by the transfer of the "Viceroys", the Mughals were not able to effectively intervene in the affairs of South India.²³

He further suggests that the rapid changes of 'Viceroys' also worsened the economy of the Deccan provinces. It was after 1652 when Aurangzeb was appointed 'Viceroy' of the Deccan for the second time; that steps were taken to improve the Mughal position in the Deccan.²⁴

Aurangzeb wanted the annexation of the entire kingdom of Golconda and had used all kinds of arguments to persuade Shahjahan to order annexation. However Shahjahan's objectives were limited, he wanted to fleece Qutb Shah in the name of compensation. By the treaty the Mughals also gained Ramgir district which was an added bonus.²⁵ For Bijapur, Shahjahan instructed Aurangzeb to annex, if possible the whole of the kingdom, else to recover the old territory of Ahmadnagar and to spare the rest for an indemnity of one and a half Gores and the recognition of the emperor's suzerainty, that is the reading of *Khutba* and *Sikka* in his name.²⁶

By the treaty of 1657 Bijapur was compelled to agree to surrender the Nizamshahi areas ceded to it by the accord of 1636 and the demand on Golconda to cede with the Mughals, the rich and fertile tract on the coromandal as part of Mir Jumla's *Jagir*.²⁷

These wars in 1656-57 against Golconda and Bijapur satisfied nobody, Aurangzeb who had advocated annexation of the two states, was enraged and frustrated at the compromise agreement. Thus the conditions were created for a union of hearts between the Mughals and the Deccan states becoming 'a psychological impossibility'.²⁸

(II) Developments in administration of the Deccan:

When Aurangzeb was appointed as the viceroy of the Deccan for the first time in 1636, the Deccan consisted of the following four *Subas*.²⁹

1. Daulatabad
2. Telangana
3. Khandesh
4. Berar

In his 8th R.Y, Shahjahan ordered the transfer from Malwa all its territories south of the Narmada River, viz, the Sarkars of Bijagarh and Nandurbar and most of the Mahals of Handia, to Khandesh.³⁰ Baglana after being annexed in 1638, was treated as a separate unit for some time, but in or by 1658 was attached to Khandesh as *Sarkar*. He also separated the *Sarkar* of Telangana from Berar and made it into a separate province, probably in the same year but towards the end of the reign; it was merged with the newly annexed territory of Bidar to form the province of Bidar.³¹

The name of Daulatabad was changed to Aurangabad and that of Telangana to Zafarabad or Bidar in the later period as can be inferred from a *Parwancha* to the period of Shah Jahan³² and from a *Siyah-i-Waqia* of the period of Aurangzeb.³³

The Mughal expansion towards the Deccan has always been taken in the economic terms and the explanation of such expansion is that the Mughal ruling class sought larger revenues for their maintenance and the emperors had to have expanding resources' to reward their favourites as against the established nobility. It was therefore the pressing need for enlarging imperial resources that dictated the policy of the Mughal emperor towards the Deccan.³⁴ The revenues of the Deccan at the time of Shahjahan's accession were 19% out of the total *Jama* of the Empire and it rose to 20.7%³⁵ in the year 1646, while in 1658 it was 20.4%³⁶ of the total revenues of the Empire.

There were multiple pressures on the revenues of the Deccan. Aurangzeb wrote to Shahjahan to urge that 'the Deccan is a frontier province' and that 'for various reasons it cannot be compared with Bengal or Gujarat; thus a strong army is needed to be always maintained here'.³⁷ The Mughals had to post a much larger number of *mansabdars* in the Deccan than the other region of the Empire. As Bernier put it, the Deccan was held to be the bread of the soldiers of Hindustan.³⁸

To maintain this army jagirs had to be found in the Deccan for the very large number of *mansabdars* to be posted in the Deccan. This tempted to raise the *Jama* so as to meet at least on papers the total salary demand of as many *mansabdars* as possible, thus an overestimation of the *Jama* of Deccan can partly be explained by reference to the military problems faced by the Mughals.

This led to the intensification of tax realization from the peasants. The assignees tried to collect whatever proportion of their salary they could and the interests of agriculture were neglected. It was perhaps owing to this excessive exploitation that agriculture failed to recover even after fifteen years of the famine of 1630-32 and it was not even covered by 1647.³⁹ However in the later years of Shahjahan's reign we find the Mughal administration proposing to advance nearly 40 to 50,000 to cultivators in Khandesh and the Painghat portion of Berar; for the purpose of erecting dams in order to increase cultivation.⁴⁰ The fall in the cultivation seems to have continued and Aurangzeb found it in a precarious position on his arrival to the Deccan in 1652-3.⁴¹

As a viceroy of the Deccan, Aurangzeb made repeated complaints about the enormous differences between the estimated income (*Jama*) and the actual collection (*Hasil*). He says that the collection of the revenues from the Deccan did not reach even 1/4th of the *Jama*.⁴² Aurangzeb himself held the mismanagement by previous governors to be chiefly responsible for the decline in the agriculture in the Deccan besides the confusion caused by the prevalence of different form of assessment and collection.⁴³

When Aurangzeb was appointed as the Viceroy of Deccan for the second time, Murshid Quli Khan was sent to the Deccan along with the prince as Diwan of Balaghat. After the period of three years on Jan 28, 1656, Murshid Quli Khan became the *Diwan* of the entire Deccan when *Painghat* was added to his charge.⁴⁴ The tenure of Murshid Quli Khan as a *Diwan* of Deccan was very important regarding the revenue administration, he introduced a particular form of crop sharing with a differential scale, depending upon crops and irrigation.⁴⁵ He carefully fixed a *rai* (crop rate) and brought land under measurement.⁴⁶ *Taqavi* loans were made to peasants to enable them to buy seeds and cattle.⁴⁷ Shahjahan was too anxious about the condition that he criticized Aurangzeb for not sanctioning forty to fifty thousand rupees on his own as *Taqavi* in the province of Khandesh and Berar.⁴⁸

The emperor Shahjahan on his part tried hard to maintain peace in the Suba and did whatever necessary to improve the economy of the Suba and boost the revenues. But the critical problem of difference between the paper *Jama* and actual collection continued. The reforms of Murshid Quli Khan also could not be of much help. The peace in the political front was established with the settlement of 1636 which imposes the tribute on Golconda and fractioning Ahmadnagar with Bijapur, but this settlement

could not last for more than twenty years. The problem of accommodating more *mansabdars* in the Deccan gradually resulted in the growing problem of *bejagiri* which later shattered the whole administrative machinery of the Mughals and finally became one of the major causes of the breakdown of the Empire.

List of the Subedars served in the Deccan under Shahjahan:

1626-1628	Pir Khan Khan Jahan Lodhi	”	Qazvini-131b Lahori, I, 75
1628-1629-	Mahabat his son Khan-i-Zaman followed him as Deputy Subedar	”	Lahori, I, 199 Qazvini, 152, 6
1629	Mir Muhammad Baqar	”	Lahori, I, 257, 293
1629-1630	Iradat Khan	”	Qazvini, 190 b Lahori I, 424
1631-1632	Mahabat Khan, Kha-i-Zaman Deputy	”	Ibid.

1632-1633	Iradat Khan	”	Ibid.
1634-1636	Mahabat Khan	”	Lahori, I, 440
1636-1637	Aurangzeb Mirza Abu Talib Deputy	Subedar	Lahori I (b) 205 Lahori I (b) 271
1637-1638	Shaista Khan	”	Lahori I (b) 288
1644-1646	Aurangzeb	”	Lahori II, 376
1646-1648	Ikhtisas Khan	”	Lahori II, 430, 679, Waris 17 (a)
1648-1649	Shahnawaz Khan	”	Waris 17 (a)
1649-1650	Muhammad Baksh	”	Waris 87 (b)
1650-1652	Shaista Khan	”	Waris 142 (a)
1652-1656	Aurangzeb	”	Waris 259 (a)

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