



Prince Ahmed : Accession, Situations and Challenges : A Critical Study

Dr. Refaq Ahmad

Assistant Professor, Medieval and Modern History, ISPGC, University of Allahabad.

Article Info

Volume 4, Issue 3

Page Number : 99-102

Publication Issue :

May-June-2021

Article History

Accepted : 01 June 2021

Published : 15 June 2021

Abstract : In reference to the accession of Prince Ahmed, it is necessary to consider the circumstances under which his accession took place. The tendency of decentralization had started in both the army and the empire, which works to overthrow the existence of any monarchical rule.

Keywords : Accession, Circumstance, Challenges, Prince Ahmad, Ahmad Shah Abdali, Rajputs, Marathas etc.

In reference to the accession of Prince Ahmed, it is necessary to consider the circumstances under which his accession took place. Most historians believe that the circumstance was in favour of Prince Ahmad and he did not face any kind of challenges to get the throne.¹ According to prominent historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Ahmad Shah was the only son of Muhammad Shah, so without a doubt, on 18 April 1748, at the age of 22, sat on the throne of Delhi.² I do not agree with this idea, further I have denied this idea, but before that I am describing the circumstances relating to the accession of Prince Ahmed as mentioned in the primary and secondary sources.

According to the primary source Tarikh-i-Ahmed, Emperor Muhammad Shah was weak from birth and used to get fever again and again. At this time also he had fever. One day he (Muhammadshah) sat in a palanquin and went to the door of Masjid Sangi, which is inside the fort. There the court was held and the rich and the acolytes were present. Suddenly he became unconscious, then he got some consciousness, but now he could not speak at all and his condition became very bad and he died on the 27th of Rabi Usani on 15 April 1748 AD (1161 Hijri) in the 31st year of his rule. The nobles who were present there decided that the news of the death of the emperor should be kept secret from the people until the arrival of the prince. Then they put his body in a European chest and buried it in Hayatbakhsh Bagh. Wrote a letter to Prince Ahmed that the emperor was seriously ill, so he reached Delhi soon and the death of the emperor was not mentioned in this letter.

After reading this letter, the prince started from Manupur (modern Sirhind) towards Delhi. On reaching beyond Panipat, he saw a procession carrying a golden umbrella and other royal emblems sent by Safdarjung. Seeing this, Prince Ahmed understood that his father had died, yet he did not wish to wear the royal emblem. He continued to march towards Delhi and after reaching there mourned the death of his father for three to four days. The noble Safdarjung knew that delay could cause problems for the throne. So, he suggested Prince Ahmad to ascend the throne soon. Therefore, Prince Ahmed ascended the throne on 18 April 1748, he was coronated on 29 April 1748 in Shalimar Bagh of Red Fort in Delhi and he assumed the title

of Abu Naris Mujahiduddin Ahmad Shah Ghazi and conferred his late father the title of Hazrat Firdous Aramgah.³

According to historian Ashirwadi Lal Srivastava, Emperor Muhammad Shah became more ill after sending his son Ahmad against Abdali's invasion. Due to which Muhammad Shah died on 25 April 1748 in Moti Mahal of Delhi Fort. So, Malika-e-Zamani sent a letter to his stepson Ahmad to return to Delhi, which was received by Prince Ahmed near Panipat on 28 April 1748 at his camp.⁴ There is a difference of opinion regarding the date of death of Emperor Muhammad Shah. Therefore, there is also a difference of opinion regarding the date of coronation of Mirza Ahmad. According to Ishwari Prasad, Muhammad Shah died on 26 April 1748 and after three days of his death on 29 April 1748, Mirza Ahmad became the ruler of Hindustan.⁵ According to historian Ashirwadi Lal Srivastava, Muhammad Shah died on April 25, 1747, and on April 28, 1748, Mirza Ahmed was coronated, and he assumed the title of 'Mujahid-ud-Din Ahmad Shah Bahadur Ghazi' and he again coronated his coronation on May 4, 1748, in shalimarg Bagh at Delhi Fort.⁶ According to historians B. R. Verma and S. R. Bakhshi, Prince Ahmad was coronated on April 28, 1748 at Shalimar Bagh, north of the Delhi Fort and assumed the title of Ahmad Shah.⁷ According to eminent historian Z. U. Malik, he died in the morning of the day (27 Rabbi - Us Sani, 1161 Hijri 15 April 1748) at the age of 49 and the news of his death was kept secret and Mirza Ahmad was in Sirhind at that time.⁸

Eminent historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar states that Prince Ahmad was the only son of Emperor Muhammad Shah due to which he became emperor without a doubt but it is not based on historical facts. In fact Prince Ahmed was not the only son of Emperor Muhammadshah, but rather he was the only son alive at that time, as he had married many and had many sons. But before his death other sons had died and only Ahmad Shah was alive at that time. According to historian Zahiruddin Malik, Emperor Muhammad Shah had four sons, Taj Muhammad, Shahryar Farwanda Akhtar, Mirza Ahmad and a daughter, Hazrat Begum. Taj Muhammad was the son of Fatehpuri, wife of Muhammad Shah, Shahryar was the son of Malika-i-Zamani. Both of these sons died in 1726 AD, Farkhanda Akhtar was the son of Fakhrunisa. He died in 1732. Thus, at the time of the death of Muhammad Shah, he had only one son, Mirza Ahmad (born from Udhabai).⁹ This was not single important reason behind Mirza Ahmad to become emperor that he was the only surviving son of Muhammad Shah, but also because he had an important and strong image in the nobles class, which he got in the Battle of Manupur (Sirhind) in March 1748 by defeating Ahmad Shah Abdali and forcing him to return to Kabul.

Abdali's defeat at Manupur (Sirhind) had made Ahmad Shah's position very strong in the eyes of the noble classes and Mirza Ahmad's prestige increased among them and they wanted Mirza Ahmad to be the emperor. Therefore, the important Amir Safdarjung suggested Ahmad Shah to soon ascend the throne and be coronated. According to Sayeed Bashir Hasan, the author of *Tarikh-i-Ahmadshah* glorifies Safdaejung's devotion to Prince Mirza Ahmad in the Battle of Manupur in 1748, and Safdarjung also tries to protect the throne of Ahmad Shah at the time of Muhammad Shah's death.¹⁰

Challenges of Ahmad Shah: Ahmad Shah's reign was like a bed of throne, not a bed of roses, because by the time of the late Mughal period, the administrative and economic institutions established by Jalaluddin Akbar had begun to weaken and internal and external problems rapidly gained their footing in the post mughal

period.¹¹ Facing these problems was a major challenge for the later mughal rulers. Ahmad Shas's had to face these challenges as he became the mughal emperor.¹²

The first major problem under Ahmad Shah's internal challenge was the rise of several independent kingdoms from his father's time, challenging the mughal authority from time to time.¹³ The second problem was that of the Bangash Pathan and the Ruhails, the third problem was the deepening of differences between Nawab Bahadur Javed Khan and wazir Safdarjung i.e. Turani and Irani faction.¹⁴

Apart from this, the problem of establishing good relations with Rajputs, Marathas, Jats and Nizams was also a major problem.¹⁵ Ahmad Shah also had to face external challenges as foreign invasion were taking place on the empire since the time of his father.¹⁶ It was not long after the invasion of Nadir Shah and its destruction and plunder that the process of invasion of Nadir Shah's successor Ahmad Shah Abdali had begun.¹⁷ So, facing Ahmad Shah Abdali's attack was also a major problem in front of Ahmad Shah.¹⁸ Ahmad Shah also had to face economic problems, because by the time of the post-mughal period, the economic situation had become very weak and strong economic resources were needed to run the empire and administration.¹⁹ So, the pressure on these economic structures became more due to which the economic structures were proving to be weak in carrying the economic burden of the empire.²⁰

Ahmad Shah also had to face administrative challenges, because by this time the centralized army had begun to weaken and the decline of the centralized army had begun. As consequence, the tendency of decentralization had started in both the army and the empire, which works to overthrow the existence of any monarchical rule.²¹

References:

1. A.C. Banarjee and D. K. Ghose (ed), *Comprehensive History of India*, Delhi, 1978, Vol. 9, 35.
2. J. N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Bombay, 1932, Vol. 1, 205.
3. *Tarikh-I-Ahmad Shah* trans. in H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own Historians*, Delhi, 1867-77, Vol. 8, 111-112.
4. A. L. Srivastava, *First Two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, 126.
5. Ishwari Prasad, *India in the Eighteenth century*, Allahabad, 1973, 33.
6. A. L. Srivastava, op.cit., 126-127.
7. B. R. Verma and S. R. Bakshi (ed.), *Foundation of Mughal Empire*, commonwealth, 2005, 223.
8. Z. U. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, Bombay, 1977, 406.
9. Ibid, 407.
10. Syed Bashir Hasan, *Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi*, A Critical Assessment, Medieval Indian History, Unpublished source material, Patna, 1988, 121.
11. DR. Refaq Ahmad, *Ahmad shah ka shasan (1748-1754)*, Anamika Publication, New Delhi, 2016, 40.
12. Ibid
13. Ibid
14. Ibid, 40-41.
15. Ibid, 41.
16. Ibid
17. Ibid

18. Ibid
19. Ibid
20. Ibid