

# Bahadur Shah Zafar Receives the Emperor of Delhi Title - [September 28, 1837] This Day in History

In this article, you can read about the last Mughal Emperor of India, Bahadur Shah Zafar. He was an important figurehead in the 1857 Revolt.

This is an important topic in the UPSC syllabus and is also relevant for other government exams.

On 28 September 1837, Bahadur Shah II, also known as Bahadur Shah Zafar ascended to the throne of Delhi and became the emperor after the death of his father Akbar Shah II.

## Bahadur Shah Zafar - Facts

### Background

- Born on 24 October 1775 in Delhi to the Mughal Emperor Akbar Shah II and Lal Bai, Bahadur Shah was his parents' second son. His birth name was Abu Zafar Sirajuddin Muhammad Bahadur Shah.
- He was not his father's first choice as successor.



### Education and Notable Accomplishments

- Bahadur Shah was more of a poet than a political leader or emperor. He was an accomplished Urdu poet and had sound knowledge in Persian and Arabic as well. He was also a calligrapher and musician.
- He was also trained in the military arts of horsemanship, swordsmanship, shooting with bow and arrow and with firearms.
- He was said to be more interested in Sufism, music and literature than in the political matters of the country. This is one of the reasons why he wasn't the preferred choice for the throne after his father.

## **Ruling Era & Important Events**

- He was 62 years old when he became king. Shah was only a nominal ruler as the once-mighty Mughal Empire had by then disintegrated and weakened. The Mughal Emperor ruled only over the city of Delhi.
- Many Kingdoms of Deccan previously under the Mughals were now part of the Maratha Empire. The East India Company was fast becoming the dominant political power in the subcontinent. Many regions which were part of the Mughal Empire had also declared independence from the Mughals. The Company had given the Mughal Emperor a pension and the authority to collect taxes in Delhi.
- Zafar was a follower of Sufism and was even regarded as a Sufi Pir. He was a tolerant king and even states in one of his verses that both Hinduism and Islam had the same essence.
- Bahadur Shah is most remembered as the last Mughal Emperor in India, and for his role in the Indian Revolt of 1857.
- It would be correct to say that he did not have any active role in it, rather he was almost like a pawn in the hands of the sepoys, who proclaimed Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of Hindustan. They wanted a figurehead to rally around and he was their choice.
- He gave public consent to the rebellion for want of options and had no real control over their actions.
- For his 'role' and tacit consent to the sepoys' activities including the murder of English nationals in Delhi, the British arrested him and members of his family. Once it was clear that the British were gaining an upper hand over the sepoys in Delhi, Bahadur Shah fled his palace and hid at Humayun's Tomb. He was arrested from his hiding place by Major William Hodson on 20 September 1857.
- After the arrest, the following day, Bahadur Shah had to endure further tragedy when his two sons and a grandson were shot and killed by Hodson in public.

## **Bahadur Shah Zafar Deportation**

- Shah was tried at the Red Fort by the Company and sentenced to exile in Burma. He was found guilty of aiding and abetting the sepoys in mutiny, assuming the sovereignty of India and of causing the murder of Christians. read to know more about Bahadur Shah Zafar's deportation March 9) at the linked article.

- Despite Shah's defence that he was helpless in the face of pressure from the sepoys, and despite his age (he was 82 then) and obvious helplessness, he was the primary accused in the trial.
- Acknowledging Hodson's promise of not awarding him a death sentence if he surrendered, Shah was exiled to Rangoon, Burma.
- He spent the last five years of his life in Rangoon where he died in November 1862 aged 87. His wife and some family members had accompanied him to Rangoon.
- The British stole many jewels and valuables from the palace and the Red Fort. Bahadur Shah's crown was stolen and now forms a part of the Royal Collection in London.
- Bahadur Shah Zafar's poems and ghazals were also lost in the Rebellion. Many of his poems have been compiled into Kulliyat-i-Zafar.

#### Other Important Events on This Day in History

1929: Birth of Lata Mangeshkar

1982: Birth of Abhinav Bindra, the first Indian to receive an individual gold medal at the Olympics