

Sikandar Begam (2nd period) (1844-69). The Nawāb left a will by which he desired that his illegitimate son Dastgīr should be recognised as his successor and that his daughter Shāh Jahān by Sikandar Begam should be married to a descendant of Wazīr Muhammad Khān of pure blood.

The will in favour of Dastgīr was set aside by Government, and several plots to place him in power were frustrated. The British Government recognised the succession of Shāh Jahān in the same manner as, on the death of Nazar Muhammad Khān, it had admitted the claims of Sikandar Begam, and it was decided that the future husband of Shāh Jahān who was to be selected from the Bhopāl family with a view to the amalgamation of the two branches descended from Ghaus Muhammad Khān and Wazīr Muhammad Khān, should be chief of Bhopāl. In the meantime Faujdār Muhammad Khān, brother of Kudsia Begam, was to act as minister receiving co-operation from Sikandar Begam. On 3rd *Rabi-ul-Akhīr* 1261 (11th April 1845) Shah Jahān Begam, then 7 years of age, arrived in Bhopāl and was proclaimed chief of the State, the Regency being entrusted to her mother Sikandar Begam with Mian Faujdār Muhammad Khān, the youngest son of Nawāb Ghaus Muhammad Khān, as minister.

This arrangement was not a success, as Sikandar Begam acted independently of the minister and the dual rule soon produced an *impasse*.

In 1846 a disturbance was caused by Amīr Muhammad Khān, paternal grandfather of Shāh Jahān, who raised a following and seized Kaliākherī fort. He was, however, dislodged by a detachment of the Bhopāl Contingent from Sehore, and confined in Asirgarh fort, where he died in 1854. The Political Agent then reported that there was no hope of peace until the dual rule was broken up. Mian Faujdār Muhammad had to resign and the administration was left to Sikandar Begam until her daughter should come of age. Sikandar Begam was an admirable administrator and effected many salutary reforms including the abolition of the farming of revenues and trade monopolies, the reorganisation of the army and police and mints, and the liquidation of the State debts. She toured regularly in her districts and examined the condition of her cultivators.

An interesting view of the Begam is given by Major Charters Macpherson, the Political Agent, who writing in 1854 notes that all three Begams were out of *pardah*, Kudsia, Sikandar, and Shāh Jahān, the last of whom was then 16 :  
 “ The grandmother and mother ride, spear, and shoot grandly or have been used to do so. . . . . The Regent is a wonderful woman in the way of government . . . talks exactly in her