

# **CEREMONIALS AND RITUALS AND MUGHAL COURT CULTURE DURING SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES**

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*in partial fulfilment of the requirements*

*for the award of the Degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**RICHA SINGH**



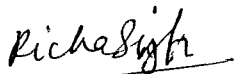
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DECLARATION


I, RICHHA SINGH, declare that the dissertation entitled “**CEREMONIALS AND RITUALS AND MUGHAL COURT CULTURE DURING SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES**” is my bona fide work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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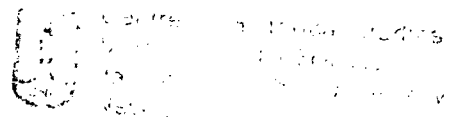
  
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CERTIFICATE

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*Dedicated to*  
*My Mother and Father*  
*(They mean the world to me)*

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चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

- Upanishad

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*Richa Singh*

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ain</i>	<i>Ain-i-Akbari</i>
A.K	<i>Akbar-Nama</i>
A.N	<i>Alamgir Nama</i>
HM	His Majesty
M.A	<i>Ma'asir-i Alamgiri</i>
M.U	<i>Ma'asir-ul Umara</i>
Ruq.	<i>Ruqa'at-iAlamgiri</i>
S.D.A	Selected Documents of Aurangzeb's Reign
T.U	<i>Tazkarat-ul Umara</i>
TUJ	<i>Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri</i>

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

## Introduction to the Theme

“So many cities! So many palaces! So many noble princes summoned at a word! Grandeur realized upon this scale was inhuman. He had to imagine a world in which even his parents were dwarfed into insignificance. His heart contracted, shrinking before its vision of gigantic, heartless splendours.”<sup>1</sup>

Such was the magnificence of the Mughals and so celebrated was their grandeur that the term ‘Mogul’<sup>2</sup> itself is now synonymous with an important or influential person.<sup>3</sup> The marvel of their splendour was unmistakable. The foreign travellers coming to the Mughal court were instantly charmed by its splendour and extravagance. Niccolao Manucci who was an Italian traveller and in the service of Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shahjahan and the heir-apparent, was greatly amazed by the magnificence of the Mughal court and remarked:

Most Europeans imagine that the grandeur of kings and princes in other parts of the world cannot compare with what is found at the courts of their sovereigns. Excluding the principal ones- those of the Emperor, the king of France, and the king of Spain- nowhere else can be found, as they think, those airs of grandeur and of majesty which follow in a sovereign's train. But, without speaking of the Emperor of China's court which according to the accounts we have, is extremely splendid and majestic, I assert that in the Mogul kingdom the nobles, and above all the king, live with such ostentation that the most sumptuous of European courts cannot compare in richness and magnificence with the lustre beheld in the Indian court.<sup>4</sup>

This was pretty noteworthy for the foreign travellers visiting Hindustan in medieval times (before the Mughals) were quite critical of the customs and mannerisms of the people they observed. Afanasy Nikitin who was a Russian merchant and one of the first Europeans to document his visit to India, when he visited the parts of Deccan India, he was surprised to observe the effortless lifestyle of the prince there:<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>L. H. Myers, *The Root and the Flower, The Classic Novel of Power, Betrayal and Intrigue set in 16th c. India*, Phoenix Press, London, First published in 1935, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>The word ‘Mogul’ was frequently used by the Europeans who had written accounts on the Mughals.

<sup>3</sup>As per defined by The Oxford English dictionary.

<sup>4</sup>Manucci, Niccolao, *Storia Do Mogor*, tr. W. Irvine, vol.ii, first pub. 1907, New Delhi, repr. 1981, p. 308.

<sup>5</sup>Afanasy Nikitin, *Voyage Beyond Three Seas 1466-1472*, Raduga Publishers Moscow, 1985, translated from the Russian by Stepan Apresyan, illustrated by Dmitry Bisti, p. 16-7.

And that is where the land of India lies, and where everyone goes naked; the women go bareheaded and with breasts uncovered... And their prince wears a dhoti upon his head and another about his loins; their *boyars* wear a *dhoti* round their shoulders and another about their loins; their princesses wrap a *dhoti* round their shoulders and another round their loins. As for the servants of the prince and the boyars, they wear a *dhoti* wound about their loins, and carry shield and sword in their hands, while others have spears or knives or sabres, or bow and arrows. And all are naked and barefoot, and strong. And the women go bareheaded and with breasts uncovered; as for the little boys and girls, they go naked till the age of seven, and do not hide their private parts.

Not only the appearance of the court and the Emperor was splendid but also the ambience of the Mughal court in its mature phase was highly formal. Even the admired contemporary courts of the Mughals were not as ceremonial as that of the Mughals. Manucci narrates an incidence wherein at the Persian court of Shah Abbas,<sup>6</sup> the English ambassador overtly flouted the set protocols of the court in the presence of the Persian grandees.<sup>7</sup>

The holding of the royal court at an imperial metropolis was of immense significance. Edifices were reflective of authority, riches, and opulence of the Emperor. The construction of more than one imperial capital (Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Shahjahanabad, and Lahore) and the structures built there along with the several activities performed were an impression of the wealth and power of the Imperial State. The imperial capitals of the indomitable Mughal Empire were a manifestation of political and cultural hegemony. Every new Emperor built his own imperial capital, his own marked architectural vocabulary and imperial heraldic devices. When the missionaries of Rudolf Acquaviva, Francis Henriques and Anthony Monserrate visited Akbar imperial capital, they noted that "Agra and Fatehpur are two very great cities, either of them much greater than London and very populous."<sup>8</sup> Vincent Smith, an Indologist, historian and art

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<sup>6</sup>Shah Abbas I was a contemporary of the Mughal Emperors, Akbar and Jahangir while the reign of Shah Abbas II was in parallel to Shahjahan and Aurangzeb.

<sup>7</sup>Manucci records the audacity of the English ambassador at the Persian court, that he left the court without performing any salutation to the *Shah* and other such court protocols. This intensity of the defiance was so high that the terrified Manucci who was too present there as a companion to the English ambassador thought that they would be killed by the King's men for it. See *A Pepys of Mogul India 1653-1708 Being an Abridged Edition of the "Storia Do Mogor" of Niccolao Manucci*, tr. William Irvine (Abridged Edition Prepared by Marget L. Irvine, Low Price Publication, Delhi, fifth edition in 1913, pp. 20-1.

<sup>8</sup>Correia-Afonso, John (ed.), *Letters from the Mughal Court, The First Jesuit Mission to Akbar (1580-1583)*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash Anand, 1980, p. 9.

historian remarks, “Nothing like Fatehpur-Sikri was ever created before or can be created again. It is 'a romance in stone' ”.<sup>9</sup>

This is why when the Britishers came to power, they too expressed the unconquerable might of the Raj by deliberately building New Delhi. As Lord Stamfordham, Pvt Secretary to George V, wrote in a letter articulating the King Emperor’s views on his new capital: “We must let (the Indians) see for the first time the power of Western Civilization...”<sup>10</sup> Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, too recognizes the city as the mark of British might in the following words, “New Delhi is the visible symbol of British power, with all its ostentation and wasteful extravagance.”<sup>11</sup>

Just as New Delhi was identifiable with British supremacy, going back in time, the imperial capitals of the Mughal Emperors were reflective of the power and force of each Mughal Emperor. An Emperor demonstrated his authority, affluence and valour through his ability to construct massive edifices in a huge number, the competence to maintain not only one imperial court but scores of them; through creating the feel of permanence of the Empire by not only having static courts but immobile ones as well.

The court was the locus of multiple activities where appointments, promotions, exchange of gifts, issuing of new *farmans*,<sup>12</sup> punishments to offenders, hearing of petitions, reception of ambassadors and dispatching of expeditions were done. It aided the Emperor in fostering a relationship with other participants at the court (the princes, nobles and the common people) for it was here that he socialized with them on a daily basis. It was a platform for demonstrating the Empire's might, wealth and grandeur, a medium for self-glorification. The court was an arena where all the activities were ritualised and had symbolic interpretation to them that gave such activity critical importance. The nobles in the imperial court had to abide by the court norms and comportment. The slightest deviation from the accepted norms could result in the offender's fall from imperial favour. Therefore, the daily court rituals were also a means of disciplining the nobles. The court aided in creating dependents of the Empire. In a nutshell, the court was the centre of several impertinent activities of the Empire.

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup>Darlymple, William, *City of Djinnns*, Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2004, p. 83.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>12</sup>Royal orders.

It was here at the court that the Emperor established and maintained hierarchy of the participants through specific codes of behaviour, gestures and speech, court etiquette, rituals, ceremonials and other such possible means. The ceremonials and rituals are a formal occasion during which a set of acts are performed.<sup>13</sup> The Mughal ceremonial comprised of *jharokha darshan*, daily activities held at the *darbar* (*diwan-i-am* and *diwan-i-khas*), salutations, seating arrangements, *tuladan*, *tika* ceremony and gift-exchange. These demonstrated the permanence and grandeur of the empire on the senses of the spectators far more effectively than other textual forms of proclamations. In the interaction between the Mughal Emperor and his nobles and subjects, ceremonial played a prominent part. They constantly reminded his nobles and subjects that they were the Mughal Emperor's inferiors. Therefore, the study of these distinctive acts is significant in order to understand their symbolic meaning, their utilization by the Emperor to legitimate his rule, to elevate his position before the eyes of the nobles and his subjects for the success of the Empire.

The Mughal court ceremonials and rituals had a long lineage behind it. Many of them were of Persian influence like *sijda*, *paibos*, and *Navroz*<sup>14</sup>. They also had Turko-Mongol origin (*Shahnashin*). Some were a part of the innovations introduced by the Emperor (*taslim* and *kornish*)<sup>15</sup> while others were borrowed from the Rajput concept of kingship viz. *tuladan*, *jharoka-darshan* and also some Hindu festivals like *dashehra*, *rakhi*, *diwali*, etc.

In the formative years, we hear of a limited number of rituals and ceremonials as there was no proper court; the early Emperors were engaged in the process of conquest and consolidation. It was from Akbar's period that many of the Mughal rituals and ceremonials took shape. Jahangir and Shahjahan brought some changes to them while Aurangzeb's reign saw major mutations in them.

The rituals and protocols at the court were more a reflection of the disposition of the reigning monarch, though the rudiments stayed unalterable. The central tenets of the courtly culture were not disparate. The beneficiaries of the imperial favour were the ones whose demeanour was agreeable to the Emperor. In contrast, those who in any way attempted to show a discrepancy in undertaking the commands of the Emperor were liable to chastisement. The temperament of the reigning Emperor played a vital role in the observance of a particular ritual

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<sup>13</sup>As defined by Oxford English dictionary.

<sup>14</sup>*Navroz* was introduced by Akbar in 1582 and weighing ceremony in 1565.

<sup>15</sup>Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. i, Bibliotheca Indica, tr. H. Blochmann, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1927, p. 321

and ceremonial. If the Emperor was liberal in character, the tolerant attitude in other fields was noticeable too.<sup>16</sup> The condition of the Empire was another area of concern for it impacted profoundly on the actions taken by the Emperor. Babur and Humayun were incessantly gripped by empire-making process and therefore, were not in a state to introduce well-defined protocols.

The court under Babur and Humayun was not institutionalised. The holding of the court or *darbar*, attended by all the princes and the members of the aristocracy, was not a customary phenomenon in the premature segment of the Mughal Empire. The court was held at irregular intervals in matters of a grave concern. Babur called all his courtiers when an attempt on his life was unveiled. Humayun did so in order to decide the fate of his rebellious half-brother, Prince Hindal who was pardoned at the request of his another half-brother, Prince Kamran.<sup>17</sup> Humayun held a public court at the Stone Palace in the garden of the late Emperor Babur, 'at which were present all the Princes and Nobles.'<sup>18</sup>

Babur was least concerned with splendour and pomp and the accretion of precious jewels and wealth.<sup>19</sup> He was more absorbed by the notion of conquest of a territory and asserting his regal influence on it. Since the time of the accidental death of his father, Umar Shaykh Mirza, who ruled over the province of *Fargana* in Transoxiana<sup>20</sup> and the loss of his kingdom<sup>21</sup>, he was terribly on the look-out for the re-conquest of his kingdom. However, in the attempt he was further shoved away from his ancestral land; thus, leaving him no alternative other than

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<sup>16</sup>Bernier tells us that as per the Jesuits at the court of Jahangir, he yearned to bring a massive change in the way the Mughal courtiers dressed themselves up. He was very much fascinated by European style of dressing and ordered for the making of European costumes for his courtiers and for him as well. Once they were tailored, out of sheer curiosity, he donned the European attire and immediately called one of his umara to know his opinion on the matter. But the umara was so thoroughly horror-struck at the sight of it that 'Jehan-Guyre abandoned his design and affected to pass the whole affair as a joke.' See Bernier pp. 287-88.

<sup>17</sup>Jouhar, *Tezkerem al vakiat or private memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup>When the Prince Humayun had presented the *Koh-i-nur*, procured from the Rani of Gwalior, who after the fall of her territory, had surrendered the celebrated diamond to Humayun 'as the price of family honour...', he allowed him to keep it. Gulbadan Begam, *Humayun Nama*, p. 14.

This was the same diamond which the exiled Humayun had offered it to Shah Tahmasp of Persia as a gift from his side when he met him there.

The Mughal Emperor Shahjahan was very fond of expensive jewels and had a massive collection of them. When Aurangzeb asked for some of his precious stones which he wished to place on his throne on the day of his second coronation, the infuriated father strictly warned not to ask for them again or else he would pound them under a hammer.

<sup>20</sup>It lies in present Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. See *Baburnama*, p. 2, for the map of Transoxiana.

<sup>21</sup>Just after the demise of his father, Babur was dreadfully troubled by his uncles, Sultan Ahmad Mirza, the *padishah* of Samarkand, and Sultan-Mahmud Khan, the khan of *Moghulistan*; the two formed an alliance against the minor child of twelve years. *Baburnama*, p.1.

retreating from there and moving towards Kabul and finally, to Hindustan where he commenced a fresh eon in the medieval Indian history.

Humayun like his father was busy in his struggle against Sher Shah Suri and after his defeat by the Afghan king, he had to take a refuge in Persia. The protocols were uncertain at this time. When Sher Khan had sent his ambassador to Humayun, the Mughal Emperor consulted with his friends, where and how he should receive the ambassador, at length he gave orders that the interview should take place in the garden of the Prince Kamran and that all the chief residents of the city should be present at the ceremony.<sup>22</sup> This implies that the general outline for the reception of the ambassadors at the court was not well laid out. They were highly flexible and frequently subjected to changes as per the wish of the Emperor and expediency of the time.

Besides, Humayun was constantly troubled by the rebels of his half-brothers. Therefore, during the phase of his attempt to recover his lost territory, he had no time to enforce strict and rigid rules and regulations. There were frequent occurrences of improper behaviour of the Emperor's men, especially of his brothers who rebelled against Humayun many a time. When Dildar Begum, the mother of the Prince Hindal who was Humayun half-brother, gave a grand entertainment, at which all ladies of the court were present; amongst these was the daughter of the Prince's preceptor, Hamida Banu Begum. Humayun was charmed by her beauty and inquired if she was betrothed. He was told that she had been asked but the proper ceremony was yet to occur. Humayun expressed his wish to marry her. This enraged Hindal who replied, "I thought you came here to do me honour, not to look out for a young bride: if you commit this (ridiculous) action, I will leave you." The insolent manner of her son, sadden Dildar Begum and admonishing him, said, "You are speaking very improperly to his Majesty, whom you ought to consider as the representative of your late father." But Hindal was not in the mood to apologize for his inappropriate demeanour which annoyed the Emperor who went away from there. Though Dildar Begum persuaded him to come back to the place and the next day she gave a nuptial banquet.<sup>23</sup> In another time, Humayun entrusted the task of carrying water for him on Jouhar, strictly warning him not to let anyone else offer him water to drink without Jouhar's seal being affixed along with several other instructions. But the next day Jouhar returned the

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<sup>22</sup>Jouhar, *Tezkerem al vakiat or private memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30-31.



water bottle to the former water-carrier, Herbay<sup>24</sup> on his demand. Seeing this, Humayun severely reprimanded Jouhar for his failure to execute his allocated chore.<sup>25</sup>

It was only when Humayun succeeded in recovering his lost dominion that he by and by attempted to enforce a series of protocols for his men. Khwand Amir, the author of *Humayun Nama*, tells us about the innovations introduced by Humayun at his court. The Emperor, Humayun would first enter the court and sit himself on the throne while the drum was beaten as an indicator for the nobles standing outside to come inside the court instantly. On nearing the end of the session, Humayun would rise from the throne and leave the court. The gunners at this point fired guns which signalled the nobles to exit the court.<sup>26</sup>

Humayun started awarding his men at the court. The keepers of the wardrobe used to bring the suits of fine apparel and the treasurers, several bags of money, so that whenever Humayun wished to reward someone with robes and money, he would be immediately provided by it.<sup>27</sup> He also classified the men at his service into three classes and they were: the *Ahl-i-Daulat* who were the officers of the state, *Ahl-Saadat* (theologians) were good men, while *Ahl-i-Murad* were people of pleasure (singers, dancers, poets and musicians).<sup>28</sup> Humayun appointed each day to one of the three classes. Mondays and Wednesdays were designated as days of pleasure (parties), and on these some days some of the old companions and chosen friends and parties of people pleasure and distinction were invited to the court. The days were spent in listening to songs and enchanting music.<sup>29</sup> He had three arrows of gold and each of these arrows was handed over to one of the leaders of the three classes so that through his agency the affairs of that class could be maintained.<sup>30</sup>

With the motive to mark his coronation as an important event, Humayun started celebrating the anniversary of his coronation and made it a great festive day, celebrated with great preparations and ostentations. He made arrangements for tournaments for striking gourds and archery and such other amusements. He made it an occasion too to distribute gifts and rewards to the men

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<sup>24</sup>Formerly it was Herbay who was assigned the task of carrying water for the Emperor but since he wished to go to Lahore to see his relatives, Humayun transferred the task to Jouhar permanently. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.111-112.

<sup>26</sup>Khwand Amir, *Humayun Nama*, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

belonging to the three classes.<sup>31</sup> Gulbadan Banu Begum, the half-sister of Humayun gives an account of this feast after Humayun returned from Chunar.

Another occasion of felicitation recorded by Khwand Amir was the marriage of Hindal Mirza. When Hindal Mirza was married, on the account of this, a great celebration was organised. Some courageous and skilled soldiers in a moment through their arrows pierced the golden and silver gourds into fragments. Pleased by their performance, the king rewarded the archers with horses and robes of honour. After this he went to the large hall of public audience and after having said his prayers he sat on the throne and sent for to his presence the men of three classes. When they entered, they offered gifts to the Emperor and stood in their place. Humayun divided the entire amount of this cash into three shares and gave to the three classes of men.<sup>32</sup> Then there were other men who were rewarded like the physician, Maulana Yusufi, who presented a *Qasidah* to the king and robes of honour were too presented.<sup>33</sup> Babur too refers to giving out robes of honour to his men on important days. At one place he writes in his memoirs that he gave one tunic and one belt which he had worn himself to two princes, Mirza Tabrizi and Mirza Beg Taghayi along with ten thousand *shahrukhis* as congratulatory gifts for Kamran's marriage and the birth of Humayun's son.<sup>34</sup>

Humayun had stopped the celebration of the old *Nauroz* as the latter day was observed by the Magi or fire-worshippers kings who belonged to the *Sassanian* dynasty of Khwand Mirza says that since 'the followers of the holy religion regarded it as objectionable', therefore, its observation was forbidden.<sup>35</sup> Jauhar speaks about a particular mode of salutation during Humayun's times which involved the act of kissing the Emperor's feet. This was performed by his half-brother, Hindal and a few other men to Humayun.<sup>36</sup>

After the premature phase of the Empire, the ceremonials and rituals at the court of Akbar attained a forceful and cosmopolitan character. The need of Akbar's time was to bring political stability, to centralize all power directly under his authority, to legitimize his rule, and set up Mughal military dominance. Indeed, his re-imagining of court practices and implementing many regulations and innovations should be viewed as tools serving the larger objective of

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<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 68

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>*Baburnama*, pp. 432-33.

<sup>35</sup>Khwand Amir, *Humayun Nama*, p. 69

<sup>36</sup>Jouhar, *Tezkerem al vakiat or private memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p. 28.

legitimizing the new Mughal sovereign in the eyes of all of his subjects, including the Hindus who were in majority. And therefore, many of the Hindu practices and rituals were incorporated. From Jahangir's period gaining legitimacy was not of much concern. The military expansion he undertook personally was fewer. His life spent more in *darbars* (court) and in indulging in various forms of royal amusements. He was especially fond of hunting and his memoir is full of hunting expeditions.

Shahjahan was the Mughal Emperor who was more fascinated by the concept of beauty and glamour. His reign replaced the robustness of his grandfather. His court saw the adoption of unprecedented beautification. The famed peacock throne studded with precious stones was one such specimen of his beautifying process. The construction of *chihil sutun* at *Diwan-i-am* for the assembled courtiers in order to protect them from the rain, storm, excessive heat of the day, and the abolition of *sijda* (the highest form of prostration which required the saluter to totally submit himself to the Emperor) reflected the change in the attitude of the reigning Emperor from the former ones. The changing character in the observation of rituals and ceremonials highlighted the fact that they were now less assertive especially the aggressiveness of Akbar's time was fading and by Aurangzeb's period, rituals were outer concerns of a monarch. The royal prerogatives like hunt for Aurangzeb were something to be indulged into only after the completion of a monarch's administrative duties. Aurangzeb was more concerned with the rigid application of protocols and the efficient performance of his officials. However, his act of doing away with a large number of traditional Mughal rituals along with his highly ambitious territorial expansion of the Empire yielded not a satisfying outcome. The Persian accounts of his time tell us the cases of many officials either disobeyed the royal orders or left the imperial service which implied that the earlier concept of pride and honour associated with the imperial service was waning by and by. Perhaps Aurangzeb failed to understand the real vitality of traditional rituals and ceremonials.

The rituals and ceremonials had several dynamics attached to it and they were not only effective tools at the hands of the Emperor to discipline his men and secure their services and faithfulness but were also instrumental in projecting a public image of his. Ceremonies like *tuladan* on the Emperor's lunar and solar birthdays, *jharoka-darshan*, etc. helped the Emperor in projecting himself as a benevolent Emperor who was charitable and just.

Such mechanisms were so an integral part of the functioning of an Empire that till date the surviving monarchy of the present time stress on them without failing. British monarch is known for celebrating his birthday twice a year. The present Queen, Elizabeth II's birthday is celebrated privately on April 21, her actual birthday, and again with an official national celebration in June. British monarchs have been publicly celebrating their birthdays in June since the 18<sup>th</sup> c., in hope of good weather for public events. On the occasion, the monarch on his birthday examines ranks of soldiers in a military ceremony called *Trooping the Colour*.<sup>37</sup>

### **Situating the Historiography and Gaps in Extant Knowledge**

We shall now discuss the existing historiography on the subject. The works, though none can be termed as wholesome, yet a few of them are worth mentioning. The period of early works on Mughal rituals and ceremonials and courtly culture was characterized by a very sluggish growth and the early authors lament about the lack of secondary research materials. The principal cause for this is preoccupation with Mughal agrarian, the monetary, the *mansab*, the *jagir* systems, etc.<sup>38</sup> Besides Norbert Elias while investigating the reason for a lack of systematic studies of such phenomenon, asserts that court society is a social formation whose market-value is low in terms of the prevalent political and social values of our time. Accordingly, systematic studies on princely courts rank low in the hierarchy of historical topics. In current sociological attempts at classifying the various types of society, court society hardly figures at all. Moreover, the bourgeois or modern critics place the ceremony and etiquette relatively low, calling them as 'superfluous triviality' or 'self-aggrandizing behaviour', and 'externals'.<sup>39</sup> Besides, information on Mughal court, its etiquette and ceremony is scattered widely and so, gathering information on the court is an arduous task.

However in present historiography there are some innovative works done in the field. But still the interest shown by the scholars of Indian history on Indian courtly culture and on the history of manners are few and especially when compared with the historiographical traditions of European courtly societies, the picture is not very encouraging as it shows largely an indifferent

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<sup>37</sup>Sunday Times of India, Ranchi, June 13, 2010, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup>Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, 'The Mughal state –Structure or Process? Reflections on Recent Western Historiography', *IESHR*, vol. 29, 1992, pp. 293-6.

<sup>39</sup>Ali, Daud, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in early Medieval India*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 103.

attitude towards such concerns. A detailed and proper research on topic is yet to be done to get a fuller picture of it. While on the other hand, European historiography on courtly culture has produced rich and diverse interpretation. The works of eminent European scholars like Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault have greatly contributed to our understanding of courtly culture and its attributes. Their works have continued to influence the scholars working on court society in recent years.

Coming to early works, the treatment to history here is mainly functional (i.e. how it happened), reductive, narrative and highly factual. But quantification of data is valuable as a means for checking conclusions based on other sources and therefore, this is one of the tools for historical formulation.<sup>40</sup> Most importantly, these early works laid a foundation stone for further research. The recent historiographical trends on the topic have been more analytical and causal (how it happened) in approach. The authors now are more concerned with explaining the causation in history, giving political, social and even psychological causes for the adoption of such elaborate Mughal rituals and protocols.

Mubarak Ali's *The Court of the Great Mughal* is one of the pioneering works on the topic because the work belongs to the period when very scanty secondary source materials were available on Mughal cultural history due to the old preoccupation with political and constitutional history. Therefore, his attempt to write something particularly on the Mughal court at that time is itself quite praiseworthy. The book highlights different facets of Mughal court life. Through his work he tries to explain the reason behind the Mughals heavily adopting non-Islamic Persian ceremonies and rituals and it was not only the Mughals but much before them the court of the Abbasid Caliphate too had incorporated some of the Persian protocols. However, when speaking about the other influences like the court ceremonies and mannerisms borrowed from the *Chingizid* and Rajput traditions, he is extremely brief.

Md. Azhar Ansari's *Social Life of the Mughal Emperors (1526-1707)* is another important early work, providing an insight into the pompous life of the Mughals, their riches and grandeur. The book gives vivid details not only about the popular Mughal festivals and celebrations like *Nauroz*, birthdays, weighing ceremonies, *Khush Ruz* (introduced by Humayun) but also those less celebrated ones and less talked about in secondary sources viz, *Shab-i-barat*, *Jashn-i-gulal*

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<sup>40</sup> K.A. Nizami, *State and Culture in Mediaval India*, Adam Publishers and Distributors, 1985, p. 25.

*push, milad* (reference to this particular rejoicing is traceable only in the reign of Shahjahan). He also talks about the changes that occurred in the observation of the ceremonials under the reigns of the Mughal Emperors (from Babur to Aurangzeb). He also shows the utility of the Mughal *darbar*. One of the significant contributions made by him is that he tries to examine the role of ladies of the Mughal harem in the court life, their part in feasts and festivals and shows the changes that crept into the world of Mughal ladies with the progress of the empire which is not much worked on in the early works.

The other early works by Medieval Indian historians like Ibn Hasan's, *The central structure of the Mughal Empire*, A.B. Pandey's, *Social and Government in Mediaval India*, *The Mughal government A.D 1556-1707* by U.N.Day, etc. follow a similar functional approach towards history-writing. Besides some of the works appear to have echoed the notion of bourgeois critics i.e. the ceremony and etiquette were mere redundant activities and behaviour. For instances, A. B Pandey's remark, 'The court squandered away crores of rupees in dissipation and pompous extravagance' and thus, misused public funds; Md. Azhar Ansari's statement, 'the pedantic show of gorgeous costume and dresses, of perfumes and cosmetics are necessary evils of aristocratic society' seem to share a similar view.

Of the recent works, *The Mughals of India* by Harbans Mukhia is one of the most essential. He regards his work as 'an essentially experimental venture, almost independently of the author's violation.' He came up with some new perspectives on the empire and calls them 'the key entry points for understanding the nature of the Mughal state and society.' Mughal etiquette is one of these key entry points. He laments that these entry points have 'remained unexplored in the arena of the history-writing of Mughal India, even in the midst of innumerable studies of a whole spectrum of themes and some very innovative endeavours', and thus, describes his writing as 'preliminary'. H.Mukhia goes beyond a narration of court etiquette and seeks to understand its evolution and more particularly its meaning, within the contest of the court as a microcosm of society. He identifies the reign of Babur, Humayun and Akbar as evolutionary phase of the Mughal etiquette as the court rules were still evolving and flexible. Through various anecdotes, he explains the relative flexibility in the observance of etiquette in the early phase of the empires evolution. According to him, the fact that the first three rulers of the Empire were personally very accessible doesn't support the notion that the rules of etiquette, the essence of which was a very strict regulation of access to the Emperor's person, were closely followed during this phase of the empire. But by the time Manucci visited Aurangzeb's

court, etiquette had become more detailed, less plastic. He also draws our attention to the fact that regarding the etiquette of the empire, there are still some uncertainties like at what point of time, the demarcated lines at the Mughal court were actually drawn is still a mystery to his historians working on this, as we learn of them from the *Ain-i-Akbari*, written towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> c.

Interestingly, he likens the protocols observed at the Mughal court with those of a holy place. For instance standing or sitting on the right side of the emperor was indicative of his favour. He quotes from the *Bible* and the *Quran* to highlight a similar connotation attached to the right side in religious spheres. Other historians like J.F Richards, Daud Ali are of the same opinion that the manners of the court overlapped with conceptions of conduct within religious domains inevitably.

Besides the historical texts, his use of Mughal miniature paintings for understanding the etiquette of the empire has been quite unique and commendable as Mughal miniatures are among the few documents that provide us with a rich body of materials for the study of the Mughal court and society. But Mukhia here makes some very significant observation on Mughal court through a cautious examination of the two Mughal miniatures, one depicting Babur's court and another, Shahjahan's.

Another fresh work done on the topic is Ruby Lal's *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* which tries to understand the peripatetic world of the Mughals under Babur and Humayun; the court society and women of the respective reigns. She gives a synoptic view of the rituals and protocols observed at the early Mughal Emperor's courts and camps. She also explores the Mughal women participation in all this in the matter of correct comportment and in the elaboration of hierarchies, what was their place in the camps and the courts but the sources available to reconstruct their world 'seem to construct women in a rather narrowly defined manner: as producers of much coveted heirs to the throne and as carriers of traditions.

Now let us take a look at the works which are not very recent yet they contribute significantly in our understanding of the topic. The book, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* by Douglas E. Streusand is on imperial court and centre. For him the real history of the Mughal state began with Akbar implicitly and so his whole focus is on examining exclusively the reign of Akbar. He provides us with a fairly conventional political history, dealing with the years from 1556 to about 1570. He talks about the definitive reforms of Akbar and attempts to demonstrate the

'syncretic' nature of ideology under Akbar, on the basis of an examination of court-ritual. He is of the view that the Mughal constitution, rituals evolved slowly. While talking about the ceremony of the exchange of gifts, he raises two issues – i) Is it possible to say that this ritual had any symbolic significance or was it just a transaction as Dirk kolff puts it and called this gift exchange as a 'gift economy'; ii) Was it a proof of the corruption prevalent in the Mughal administration.

M.Athar Ali in *The Mughal Nobility* under Aurangzeb explores the various aspects of Mughal nobles under Aurangzeb's reign and some were related to their conduct at the Mughal court , the protocols they followed, honorary distinctions and titles they received and the system of presents . He shows a connection between the imperial favour and the rank of a noble i.e., higher the rank of a noble, greater the imperial flavour he received. Through his work, he attempts to bring out a darker side of the ritual of *peshkash* and criticized it from ethical point of view and concludes that the Mughal governing class was a corrupt one who would not perform their tasks without their hands being greased. However, his contention is primarily based on European sources (Norris, Manucci, and Bernier) and these sources are partly based on bazaar-gossip. The author, himself at one place seems to doubt the reliability of these European sources when he remarks,' how far Bernier is right in stating that the nobles were ruined partly because of presents, they had to offer to the Emperor, it is difficult to say'. Besides, Harbans Mukhia asserts that these European travellers were unable to understand an 'alternative cultural and political milieu,' and constantly denounced the giving of gifts and tributes to the Mughal Emperor, princes, and nobles as bribes. But in actuality, the giving of gifts by an inferior to his supervisor was reflective of a hierarchy of rights. J.F. Richards, in 'The Mughal Empire, says that the demand of gifts by the Mughal Emperor from his courtiers everyday and also from the petitioners was far from being an index of greed but these gifts were given to his Majesty for the imperial favour granted to them by letting them enter the grand Mughal *darbar* and allowing them to have a glimpse of his August presence. R. Nath's work, 'History of Mughal Architecture', reveals a very significant point that while *peshkash* was received openly, there was '*Dasturi*' or commission for getting some work done, given clandestinely. Ather Ali, since extensively and exclusively, deals with the Mughal nobility therefore he claims that the real object of these detailed rules of court etiquette was 'to impress upon the nobles of magnitude of the imperial prestige and authority' and 'at the same time to



impress the mass of the people.’ but on a closer examination of these rituals and protocols, we realize that they were the means of realizing a greater object.

*The Prime Ministers of Aurangzeb* by Laiq Ahmad throws light on the three wazirs or Prime Ministers of the Empire: Muazzam Khan, Jafar Khan and Asad Khan. One very useful piece of information gathered from this work was the high-ranking nobles in their attempt to get imperial favour; they tried to appease the ladies of the harem. Mir Muhammad Saeed who was later known as Muazzam Khan and was a favourite of Aurangzeb's mother Hayat Bakhshi Begum, built a four-storied palace *Hayat Mahal*, after her name under his personal supervision. The fact that the palace was so magnificent is obvious from its comparison with the 'Eden' by Nizamuddin Ahmad the author of *Hadiqat-us-Salatin*. There is an interesting narration of the grand reception of Aurangzeb on his royal visit to the palace. He shows the suspicion created in the minds of the Kachwaha Rajput nobles due to the certain rituals abolished by Aurangzeb. One such important ceremony was that of the application of 'tika' on the forehead of a subjugated Raja.

R. Nath in his article, 'The Institution of *Jharoka-darsan*' in S. Nurul Hasan edited volume *Art and Culture* tries to trace the growth and development of this institution of *Jharoka* from Babur to Aurangzeb. The first reference to it from the Mughal sources comes from the *Baburnama*. Babur called it *Shah Nashin* and this was a *Timurid* custom, thus brought from central Asia. Humayun continued it. But it was Akbar who gave it the status of the institution and used it for watching elephant-fights as well. Jahangir broadened its scope by adding continued various functions to it. Under Shahjahan it continued with same purposes. However, for Aurangzeb's reign, he doesn't directly mention that he abolished it (as other historians like I.H Qureshi in *The Adminstrating of the Mughal empire*) but he uses Saqi Mustaid Khan's *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* to prove that it was practiced under Aurangzeb 'at least as late as 1670 or the 12<sup>th</sup> year of his reign'. From this review of the growth and development of the *jharoka*, he makes a point that it was more an institution than architecture.

G.Z. Refai begins his article 'Foreign Embassies to Aurangzeb's court at Delhi, 1661-65' by bringing the reader's attention to the sketchy accounts of Islamic diplomacy which hardly contain any information on the history of Mughal diplomacy and that the lack of material derives from the total indifference shown by Mughal chroniclers towards recording the details of ambassadorial visits. He asserts that 'from the famous embassy of Charlemagne to *Caliph*

Harun al Rashid's court in the ninth century to Aurangzeb's time in the eighteenth century, we have to turn to foreign sources for detailed accounts.' Mughal court chroniclers recorded only the embassies of rival Muslim powers whose visits attested the power and wealth of the host. The only notice given to a non-Muslim embassy by Mughal historians was the Ethiopian embassy to Aurangzeb in 1665.

'The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir' by John. F. Richards in *The Mughal state 1526-1750* edited by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, revolves around the question of why and how were the Mughal Emperors (Akbar and Jahangir) able to create a system of authoritative, hierarchical relationships; that how they helped in the idolization of the recurrent problem of challengeable legitimate rule or of political stability , how expansion of bureaucracy during Akbar's time, called for a need to unite the heterogeneous Mughal nobility for a common cause of upholding the integrity and sovereignty of the empire; how they acted as a binding factor between the emperor and the nobles at the Mughal court and what about the sense of loyalty of the nobles who were on a prolonged separation from the imperial centre, how their loyalty was evoked; how the rituals aided in the establishment of a master-slave relationship; and how submission to the Emperor, the unconditional service and obedience was synonymous with imperial favour and enhancement of honour.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study reveals that in the Mughal courtly culture, the rituals and ceremonials observed were pretty formal in comparison to other contemporary courts in the Islamic world. By Akbar's time they attained a forceful character. But was the strict adherence to courtly norms and protocols a means of ensuring the success of the Empire or was a little relaxation in some cases a wiser option to prevent a dent on the cachet of the mighty Empire? I would also like to explore how personal occurrences of an Emperor's life can potentially alter or change his personality or his decision-making process and consequently, the polity of the Empire? Accordingly, how the codes of behaviour and rituals and ceremonials in the Mughal courtly culture aided in the making of an Emperor? Were rituals and ceremonials a hand-maiden of politics or vice-versa? Finally, the rituals and ceremonials in Mughal courtly culture aided in the deification of the Emperor fostered a master-slave relationship and fulfilled such state ideologies. However, in spite of all, we do come across the instances of transgressions in the

observation of prescribed or expected norms of behaviour. Hence one of the purposes of study is to situate the problem of abrasions by the Mughal bureaucrats.

### Sources

To address the above questions three different types of primary sources have been used. First, beginning with the Persian sources, they are full of information on the Mughal ceremonials and rituals they followed and on courtly culture, especially from Akbar's period. The Mughal court chroniclers were all courtiers, dealt primarily with the accession and coronation of the Emperor, his daily routine, dispensation of kingly duties, polity, nobility and administration. Therefore, there is no lack of source material on the subject. But the information available on them is dispersed and organising the scattered information is quite an arduous affair. Besides the court chroniclers hardly record anything on the Mughal subjects (leaving Abul Fazl's account) and so on one hand we have enough of information on the employment of the ceremonials and rituals in making and in the preservation of the Mughal courtly culture but what exactly was their role in building up a relationship between the Emperor and his subjects has not been stressed in the Persian accounts and also it has not been a matter of serious study. In the historical writing of the period the Europeans coming to the Mughal court were largely ignored too.

Starting with the peripatetic phase of the Empire, memoirs of the first Mughal Emperor Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur, the *Baburnama* is an essential source for understanding the situation of his time. The *Baburnama* was originally written in Chaghatay Turkish by Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur (1483-1530) which was spoken by his antecedent Timur-i-Lang. Babur was the founder of the Mughal Empire in Hindustan. Thackston maintains it to be the first autobiography in Islamic literature. In 1494, at age 12, Babur after an accidental death of his father, Umar-Shaikh Mirza, was crowned a minor ruler in Fergana, in Central Asia. However, he had to retreat from there due to a conspiracy of his uncles to overpower him. Therefore, he was compelled to leave his ancestral land and move to Kabul. From Kabul, the circumstances further forced him to enter Hindustan. At his death in 1530 he controlled much of northern India, having founded what would become the "Mughal" Empire. As well as covering key historical events, his life story, the *Baburnama*, offers an enthralling picture of aristocratic life in Transoxiana (modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) and Hindustan around 1500.

The *Baburnama* deals not only with the martial and political history but it beautifully describe several places he went and personally saw; flora and fauna, modes of hunting, and fishing. He often enthusiastically records the wine parties, recital of poetry and other such ways of amusements and merriments he and his men used to involve themselves into. From his record it is very much clear that the protocols observed during such occasions were not rigid. The parties were thrown at the will of Babur, whenever he felt like enjoying with his men. Hardly do we come across that a feast was thrown to commemorate some important event of the Empire or the events associated with his lost ancestral territory. Perhaps the difficult nomadic life of Babur made him to grab every moment worth celebrating. Besides, the notion of splendour was of little importance to him. Engaged in war now and then, the holding of the court in his time could not have been a daily activity of the Emperor; only in times of expediency the nobles were asked to assemble. Likewise, we do come across an instance wherein he says of giving an audience to the people of Kabul. Akbar too in his reign had a similar kind of practice introduced which was known as *jharoka-darshan*. However, Babur says that this was a Turko-Mongol tradition and calls it '*Shahnashin*'. Other aspects like the exchange of gifts, award of robes of honour, titles on important functions like on the arrival of the Uzbek ambassadors, marriage of Prince Kamran, birth of a royal child, etc. were a part of the court activities.

To examine the rituals and ceremonials of Humayun's time, his sister's account is fundamental. Gulbadan Begum was asked by her nephew Akbar to chronicle the story of her brother Humayun so that Abul Fazl could use the information in his own writings about the Emperor (the well known *Akbarnama*). Gulbadan wrote in simple Persian without the erudite language used by better known writers. Her father Babur had written *Baburnama* in the same style and she took his cue and wrote down from her memory. Unlike some of her contemporary writers, Gulbadan wrote a factual account of what she remembered, without embellishment. In contrast to the laudatory encomium written by the better known writers, Gulbadan's account seems to be fresh and from the heart. What she produced not only chronicles the uncertainty of Humayun's rule, its trials and tribulations, but also gives us a glimpse of life in the Mughal harem. From her work it is to be observed that the females of Babur's and Humayun's period used to mix freely with their male-friends and visitors. Sometimes they went out in male garments, played sports like polo and enjoyed music as well. It is the only writing penned by a woman of Mughal royalty in the sixteenth century. The memoir had been lost for several centuries and what has been found is not well preserved, poorly bound with many pages

missing. It also appears to be incomplete, with the last chapters missing. Yet, whatever has remained tells a remarkable story of a woman of privilege, with an insight to the life in the harem of Mughal Emperors. A battered copy of the manuscript is kept in the British museum. Annette S. Beveridge translated Gulabadian's Persian work to English in 1902. She had written little about her father Babur, as she was too young to remember her father when he died. Her younger days were spent in the typical style of the peripatetic Mughal family, wandering from Kabul to Delhi and then back to Kabul. During Humayun's exile the problem was further exaggerated. It was because of the peripatetic situation, many of the things were not well-laid out. Her writing, however, does not throw much light on the court of the time. But, it does tell us about some interesting details regarding the royal marriages and feasts and the role of women in such activities.

Another person who was a witness to Humayun's reign was Jouher. Since Jouher was in the service of Humayun while still a youth and continued in it till his death, and was in constant attendance to him, therefore, it occurred to him to record all the happenings of his master, Humayun's period. Therefore, he wrote *Tezkerem al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Mughal Emperor Humayun*. He was the Aftabchy or Ewer bearer of Humayun. He makes it clear to his readers that his attempt in writing this work is not to narrate all occurrences which have taken place during Humayun's period, but only to focus on those incidences in which the Emperor was personally concerned and thus he began the narration with the accession of Humayun and ended it with his return from Persia and his regaining the sovereignty. His work is essential from the fact that it documents the activities of Humayun in his day to day life closely. Though his daily life was not ritualised as we see in the times of the Mughal successors, yet there were attempts made by Humayun to formulate some codes of behaviour and made his men abide by them. One such example was Humayun allotted the task of a water-carrier to Jouher and had strictly given some instructions. However, since Humayun was of a forgiving nature and on many occasions, he had not only forgiven many political offences of his brothers, but also of his officials, therefore, when Jouhar had failed to confirm to his instructions, he was only gave him a smack on his head. The author does not deal much with the phase of Humayun's reconquest of Hindustan and his life afterwards.

Khwand Amir's *Humayun Nama* is important from the fact that it reveals several innovations brought by Humayun at his court. It was after he returned from exile from Persia and his reconquest of Hindustan that he had an opportunity to implement rules and regulations at his

court. Amir gives an account of the celebrations at the court and also that the court was held not only on important occasions but every day and he fixed tasks to his men at court. While the records of Gulbadan and Jouher tell us about the peripatetic court life of Humayun's period Amir's account throws light on the fact that after he regained his lost dominion which also marked the end of the Emperor's nomadic life, the court became stable and the courtiers were called to attend it on a regular basis. At this phase of his life, Humayun attempted to bring several innovations which he thought to be appropriate for the court. However, the Mughal rituals and ceremonials acquired their main character since Akbar's period who brought a series of them at his court.

The most important Persian source available on Akbar's reign is undoubtedly Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*. The *Akbarnama*, which literally means History of Akbar, is a biographical account of Akbar, written in Persian. It includes vivid and detailed descriptions of his life and times. The book was commissioned by Akbar, and written by Abul Fazl, one of the Nine Jewels of Akbar's royal court. It is stated that the book took seven years to be completed. The *Akbarnama* consists of three volumes or parts. The first volume deals with the genealogy of the descendants of Timur, and detailed information from the birth of Akbar, his accession to the throne, and reign until the seventeenth year from his accession to the throne. The second volume narrates the reign of Akbar from the eighteenth year of his reign to the forty sixth year of his reign. It stops there because Abul Fazl was assassinated at the order of Jahangir, Akbar's son and heir on August 12, 1602. This massive work of Abul Fazl is a fountain of many important information on Akbar's attempt to stabilize the Empire, his gradual incorporation of several Rajput Rajas, chieftains and other such important men; the concept of a regular court became prominent from his period. It is helpful to understand that many of the court activities, celebrations and protocols at the court became one of the dominant sections of the Empire.

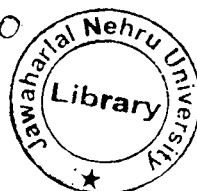
The third volume of the *Akbarnama* is the *Ain-i-Akbari* which again is divided into three volumes. Abul Fazl's, *Akbar Nama* and *Ain-i-Akbari* both are an indispensable source of information for understanding the period of Akbar. For my dissertation, I have mainly utilized the volume one of *Ain-i-Akbari*. Regarding the court of Akbar, it throws immense light on the regulations for admission to the court, for performing salutations (*taslim* and *kornish*), on etiquette, the daily activities of Akbar, the celebrations at the court (*tuladan*, *Nauroz*, *Khushrooz*, etc.), feasts, on mounting of the guard, on hunting and modes of amusement and music. Particularly interesting was his account of imperial animals, describing the way they were

acquired through hunting and their training afterwards and that how Akbar without much difficulty was able to instruct the fiercest of the beasts. The special treatment allotted to the best quality of animals called *khasa* is something of much interest and reveals the fact that like the imperial nobles, the imperial animals were well-stratified too and received honours, and favours as per their performance and wish of the Emperor. Abul Fazl painstakingly gives a biography of each noble of the Empire and their escalation in the Mughal court society or their disgraceful fall from the imperial favours. Everywhere he attempts to deify Akbar. Even his single act of pigeon-flying is depicted as the Emperor's way to worship God, but when a common man indulged in such an activity, he was blamed of wasting his time.

Another relevant work by the same author, Abul Fazl is *Mukatabat-i-Allami (Insha'i Abul Fazl) Daftar I: Letters of the Emperor Akbar in English Translation*. It is a collection of letters written by Fazl, at the orders of Akbar, collected by his nephew and son-in-law 'Abdu's-Samad. The contents of letters are interesting and throw some new lights on Akbar's dealings with the rulers of foreign lands (especially with the Shah of Persia) and with his nobles.

But Akbar's life and his innovations could not be well-understood without Abdul Qadir Badauni's work, *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh* which is a general history of the Muslim rule in India. It was composed in 1595. This work is in three volumes. The first volume contains an account of Babur and Humayun. The second volume exclusively deals with Akbar's reign up to 1595. This volume is an unusually frank and critical account of Akbar's measures, particularly religious and his conduct. This volume was kept concealed till Akbar's death and was published after Jahangir's accession. For my work, this is the volume which I have utilized. The third volume describes the lives and works of Muslim religious figures, scholars, physicians and poets. His work is imperative from the historical point of view. This book is written from the point of view of an orthodox Sunni Muslim and his disgust for Akbar's views on religion and his syncretise policy and several innovations brought at the court and for the Empire is evident from his writing. Nevertheless, his writing on Akbar's reign is very much relevant in order to understand the reign of Akbar in totality because on one hand, we have Abul Fazl, the official court chronicler of Akbar's period who extensively eulogises every single attempt of his patron and leaves no stone unturned to glorify the Emperor while on the other, we have Badauni who is extremely bitter towards Akbar due to the Emperor's treatment of the man and his subsequent fall from receiving Akbar's favours. Badauni is bitter towards Abul Fazl as well for

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he sees his fall was due to him. Badauni criticizes many of the orders issued by Akbar and calls them as his way to please Hindus whose support he wanted desperately.

Then we have Abul Qasim Namakin, *Munshaat-i-Namakin* which is a collection of documents that was compiled during the last years of Akbar's reign. The compiler, Abul Qasim Namakin was a nobleman of some eminence and served under Akbar and Jahangir. It contains letters of great importance. There was one letter addressed by Akbar to Shah Tahmasp sent some time in 1565 rejecting his suggestions to confer the titles of *Khan-i-Khanan* and *Sipah Salar* upon one of his nobles, Sultan Mahmud Bhakkari. The another letter was from Shah Tahmasp to Akbar making amends for having made an old request in an earlier letter that the titles of *Khan-i-Khanan* and *Sipah Salar* be conferred upon Sultan Mahmud Bhakkari. Thus the contents of the letter suggest that granting of titles to nobles was a sole right of the Emperor and it denoted one of his royal prerogatives. Not that the Emperor did not promote his officials on the basis of recommendations, but they were made by either high officials of his Empire, or by any of the royal members (princes or royal ladies), but the ability of certain men and women of his Empire to make recommendations to him was one of the favours granted upon them. However, recommendations coming from foreign lands to him were indeed not acceptable. The denial of recommendation made by the Shah of Persia to the Mughal Emperor actually expressed the notion that the Mughal Emperor was not the one to confirm.

The *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* throws light on the courtly life and the celebrations and rituals associated with the court of Akbar's son, Jahanir in vivid details. It is an autobiography of the Mughal Emperor, Jahangir. The first volume is from the first to the twelfth year of his reign while the second is from the thirteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth year of his reign. After the completion of the first volume, Jahangir had a number of copies made and distributed. Now giving a book from the imperial library was one of the valuable gifts showered upon the recipient and was seen as the royal favour to the man. The very first copy Jahangir gave to his son, Prince Khurram (Shahjahan) to honour him.

Later due to his ill-health, Jahangir could not concentrate on writing his memoirs and so instructed one of his nobles to write. Jahangir asked Mutamad Khan to continue writing his memoirs. Mutamad Khan then dropped writing it in the name of the Emperor, but he continued the narrative of the reign, to Jahangir's death, in his own work, the *Iqbalnama*. Again, allowing someone to record the Emperor's reign was considered to be one of the great favours shown by



him and only the closest was given such an opportunity. Like in the earlier case, we see Abul Fazl, one of the close companions of Akbar, received this chance of documenting the reign of Akbar who, in gratitude, completely glorified the Emperor.

Jahangir's account is indispensable in understanding him and his reign. The work is the major source for his reign. Jahangir was less of a conqueror and more of an observer. Throughout his reign, he made no personal attempts to conquer a territory unlike his father. However, his memoirs is full of examples of the awards of honours, ranks, exchange of costly gifts, the hunting expeditions he undertook and the number of animals he killed; his hunting expertise along with that of his father's and Nur Jahan's. He meticulously records all the valuable and rare gifts he received from his important nobles, Rajas, chieftains, zamindars, the subjugated rulers of Golconda, the ambassadors of Persia, Turkey, Uzbeks, etc. Interestingly, Jahangir who was very fond of Sir Thomas Roe and made him his disciple too, did not mention anything about him in his memoirs.

Inayat Khan's *Shahajahan Nama* serves valuable information regarding the activities of the court of Shahjahan. The book opens with the accession of the Emperor, Shahjahan and his undertaking of many kingly functions like self-adornment with a high sounding title, granting of *mansabs* and *jagirs*, promotions, gifts, robes of honour and issuing of *farmans*, one of which forbade the observation of *sijda* and in place of it, he introduced *chahar-taslim*. The account gives a rich panorama of the reign, about the innumerable royal audiences at which the Emperor received the homage of the assembled nobles and grandees of his realm, as well as foreign ambassadors and travellers from all over the world-all in accordance with strict and intricate court etiquette. It captures the sense of pageantry that was such an integral part of courtly life, the minutiae of the Emperor's daily routine and elaborate court ceremonials like the annual *Navroz* festivals, the weighing against gold on the occasions of royal birthdays according to both the solar and the lunar calendars, and the great public displays at the time of the marriages of the noble princes.

*Akham-i-Alamgiri* written by Mirza Muhammad Kazim, is a history of the first ten years of the reign of the Emperor Alamgir, written in 1688. It is the only official record we have for the reign of Aurangzeb because after the completion of the first decade of his rule, the Emperor forbade the author from continuing it any further. And since it is the only official record from

his reign, the relevance of it increases automatically. It presents exactly the image that the Emperor desired to communicate of himself and the vast empire that he ruled.

The rest of the accounts written on Aurangzeb were recorded clandestinely. *Futuh-i-Alamgiri* is an important source of information for various developments during the reign of Aurangzeb. As a non-official writer, his account is of immense importance for the students of Medieval Indian History. It is a valuable source; a non-commissioned, non-official work which was neither written to glorify the reign of Aurangzeb nor to denigrate it, nor to win any person's favour. Ishwardas, the author who was an eye-witness almost to all the important events of this crucial period of Indian History, worked under *Qazi-ul-quzat* Shaikh-ul-Islam and Shujat Khan, the *subedar* of Ahmadabad and was also responsible for the reconciliation between the Mughals and the Rathors. He is the first chronicler of Aurangzeb's reign. He records Aurangzeb's deployment of imperial ranks, *mansabs*, gifts, etc. in enticing the important officials of the opponent parties.

Saqi Mustaid Khan's *Maasir-i-Alamgiri (Reign 1658-1707)* is another work on Aurangzeb written unofficially. In spite of the fact, the author does not give any critical view of the period. But at the same time the nauseating flattery of the author is not evident. The author records the events as they occurred ranging from the prohibitions and sanctions Aurangzeb had introduced at his court to the treatment of Shivaji at his court. In all the events, Saqi Mustaid Khan justifies the actions of his Emperor calling them the necessity of the time and that His Majesty was more inclined towards the performance of his kingly functions and not much concerned with the outward worth.

To get a glimpse of Aurangzeb's courtly life as well as his private life *Ruqaat-i-Alamgiri* which are a collection of his letters addressed to his sons, grandsons, and some high ranking nobles. In these letters Aurangzeb is found giving advice to his sons about the kingly duties, about the way they should conduct themselves and their treatment to the officials. The letters are relatively important because Aurangzeb very effectually forbade the recording of the events of his reign from the eleventh year of his rule and therefore, the various happenings of his time can only be traced through the means of letters on business and of notes taken secretly.

Another important source dealing with Aurangzeb's reign is Anees Jahan Syed's *Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-al Lubab*. This is a study that consists the translation of the relevant sections of *Muntakhab-al Lubab* (upto 1688 A.D) along with a running comparison of Khafi Khan with

Sadiq Khan and Mamuri. It begins with Aurangzeb's life as the Prince till his thirty-first regnal year (1687-88). It captures the various events occurring in his life and his kingly duties.

*Selected Documents of Aurangzeb's Reign 1659-1706*, ed. by Dr. Yusuf Husain Khan is yet another source to study Aurangzeb's period. Out of the huge number of documents of Aurangzeb's reign in the Central Records Office, Hyderabad-Deccan, 168 documents have been selected for the present work. This is the third volume of the series comprising '*Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign*', and '*Selected Waqai of the Deccan*'. The documents deal with various administrative matters, such as the presentation of *Peshkash*, *Nazr*, *Nisar*, awards of *khilats*, titles, royal gifts, assignment of *jagirs*, grant of *mansabs*, promotions and demotions, appointment of the officials who were formerly in the service of Bijapur rulers and of Shivaji and also through the means of high *mansabs*, titles, and rewards, a number of high officials associated with the Qutub Shahi and Adil Shahi courts and military leaders of Shivaji were persuaded to join the Mughal service.

Since the nobles were one of the important participants in the courtly culture, therefore, now let us look at the Persian accounts which are wholly dedicated to the Mughal nobility. The Mughal Empire had one of the world's most elaborate bureaucracies which were sustained by a network of rituals of compliance and duty towards the Emperor. In return, they were honoured and favoured and thus continued to be a part of the Mughal grandees. But this is also to be examined whether all the nobles complied or that some showed the signs of transgression and that if they defied, how they were treated. To understand the Mughal nobility closely, *The Maasir-ul-umara* of Nawab Samsam-ud-daula Shah Nawaz Khan and his son Abdul Hayy, and another, *Tazkiratul-Umara of Kewal Ram, Biographical Account of the Mughal Nobility 1556-1707 A.D.* are useful in discovering their life histories, their rise and fall in the imperial service, and their responses to their standing in Mughal society which was heavily stratified.

Kewal Ram had compiled the biographies of about twelve hundred nobles beginning from the reign of Akbar (1556-1605) till that of Aurangzeb's. Biographies are very simple and brief, indicating the *mansab*, positions held, and successive promotions of each noble, place of posting. It is divided into two volumes. First volume deals with the Muslim nobility while the second covers the account of the Hindu nobility. The part of Muslim nobility is further divided on the basis of the ranks the nobles held. The high ranking nobles were dealt first, followed by the nobles of lower ranks but holding some titles and the last part comprises the nobles with

lower ranks and with no titles. The section dealing with Hindu nobility is too divided but into two parts: one is on the nobles holding the titles and the second deals with those nobles who were not holding the titles. It contains a lot of biographies of nobles from Aurangzeb's period.

M. A. Ansari's *Administrative Documents of Mughal India*, covering the period from 1563-64 A.D. to 1858 is full of valuable information too regarding the bestowal of ranks, titles, royal insignias like flags, and *naqqarah* to high-ranking nobles, recommendations made by ladies of the royal harem (Inayat Allah was recommended by Princess Zaib-al-Nisa to his royal father), visits paid by the Emperor to the residence of the nobles to honour them (Shahjahan visited the residence of Jafar Khan) and sometimes also for *iyadat* (to enquire about the health of a sick noble) and other such methods of honouring a noble. The way the nobles were addressed like 'the cream among the equals and the peers...the worthy of the limitless kindness (Jai Singh)', etc. is also very enlightening.

We also have some significant documents of the Mughal ladies. *Edicts from the Mughal Harem* contains a unique collection of edicts issued by queen-Mothers like Hamida Banu, and Maryam Zamani, royal consorts like Nur Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal, by Prince's consort Nadira Banu and also by Princess like Jahan Ara from 1581 to 1680 A.D. The significance of the work lies in the fact that it throws a new light on the activities of the ladies of the Mughal harem for the Mughal official accounts hardly reveal much on the issue. The edicts reveal that the royal women participated in the politics of the state, made recommendations, awarded *khilats* (robes of honour), and so on. The edicts issued by the queen-Mothers and royal consorts were called *hukms* and they rank only next to the *farmans* issued by the Emperor. For an example Nur Jahan in appreciation of Raja Jai Singh's devotion had sent a *hukm for* him through Khwaja Ruz Bhan who also carried a special *khilat* for the Raja.

However, written chiefly to celebrate their power and magnificence, highlighting on durbars, processions, long and elaborate lists of gifts received and presented at the court from a variety of men, and expensive jewels, the official Mughal chronicles can appear to some extent one dimensional. The Mughal court chroniclers work had to be checked and approved by the Emperor or by a designated official. E.g. the name of Qazwini's massive work, entitled *Padshahnama*, was decided upon by the Emperor himself.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the tendency of

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<sup>41</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, intro. xviii.

concealment among the court chroniclers is evident. European travellers' accounts on the Mughal court provide a great counterpart to the Mughal court's own writings. Since the European travellers were not writing to please the reigning Emperor, and were not obliged to confirm to any patron in Hindustan, therefore, they were more explicit in recording the flaws in the Empire, the corrupt officials, the competing palace factions and plots for assassinating their rivals, and scandals. Bernier was an educated and aristocratic French doctor who became much sought after as a physician by the Mughal royal family. Bernier constantly contrasts Mughal India and 17<sup>th</sup> c. French.

Nonetheless, while dealing with the European travelogues, one needs to be cautious enough for they were from a completely dissimilar environment and examined the surroundings more as an outsider than as a part of the existing system of a new world. They relentlessly contrasted the way the things worked back in their lands with those found in Hindustan and on countless occasions, were either disappointed or flabbergasted by them. Manucci in his work while highlighting the reasons for his writing, says, 'I should never have done were I to recount all the frauds and hypocrisies of this king. But, after all, since I have undertaken to give some stories, as much to entertain my reader as to inform him of the frailties and virtues of mankind, the life of this monarch of Hindustan furnishes me with ample store.'<sup>42</sup> There are certain things we need to keep in mind when dealing with European travelogues. For examples, what were the motives of writing accounts by the writers? Was it to attract the attention of the people of writer's native country? Because the Europeans at the Mughal court addressed European employers or friends rather than Indian readers and none wrote to any of the Indian nobles. Were the writers following any set rules for writing the accounts? What the writers generally were attempting to seek? Was for them to evoke the interest of their countrymen, the marvels and curiosities more important? How different were they from us? Did they record the account with an open mind, with objectivity or were they entangled with pre-conceived mind? Was the account of the writers influenced by their predecessors? How far a writer from a different land could understand the culture or different dimensions related to the land he wrote about? We also need to understand their possible personal benefitting motives and therefore, it is important to examine the context of such descriptions before taking them as factual. Like Sir Thomas Roe was a diplomat and Norris was more interested in getting some commercial gains from the Mughal Emperor for his Company. While Catholic missionaries like Monserrate and others

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<sup>42</sup>Manucci, vol. iii, p. 244.

were seeking religious influence and tried to convert Akbar. Did the treatment received by him at the court or by the nobles or the failure of embassy bring any frustration in the writing as well? The travellers or ambassadors did not have prior knowledge about the land they went unlike in today's age wherein the market is flooded with travel guide books and the modern ambassadors equip themselves well with the information about the country they go to. They had come to India for a short period of time, information they collected or source of information was bazaar gossip. Edward Norris, the ambassador at the court of Aurangzeb tried to equip himself with the information regarding the court norms and protocols through his European friends. But some were actually present at the Mughal court and nearly attended the court regularly like Sir Thomas Roe, and Bernier and seen the developments of the happenings, the culture, customs of the empire quite closely. Some also got the opportunity to interact with the nobles quite often. Bernier was placed under the care of Danishmand Khan, who was one of the chief nobles of Shahjahan's reign. Amusingly, Indian sources are silent on the Europeans who had visited the court of the Mughals. Only the visits of the ambassadors and travellers coming from the Islamic world and the neighbouring territories are recorded.

We don't have any European source for the peripatetic phase of the Empire. John Mildenhall and Ralph Fitch (in 1585) were the two important Europeans to visit the court of Akbar. *Early Travels in India 1583-1619*, edited by William Foster C.I.E gives a brief introduction to the Europeans who had come to the courts of the three Mughal Emperors: Akbar, Jahangir, and Shahjahan. *Letters from the Mughal Court, The First Jesuit Mission to Akbar (1580-1583)* contain the earliest impressions of the Mughal empire ever recorded by European writers. The scarcity of contemporary accounts of India in the days of Akbar, apart from the court chronicles, lends additional importance to these letters, for they report in part information unobtainable from other sources. They shed an intimate light on the character and mind of the emperor, and afford the reader an insight into the general conditions of life in Mughal times.

*The Empire of the Great Mogol* written by Joannes De Laet who was the Flemish geographer, deals with the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir and records the events of the court of Agra and the celebrations there with special reference to Nauroz and the Emperor's birthdays. Though he had personally never visited the court of Akbar or of Jahangir, but he had collected a range of information from other accounts to write his own.

*The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619* is a valuable contribution to the courtly life of Jahangir's period. Roe was a successful English diplomat. He was in near daily attendance in the court and camp of Jahangir for almost three years (1615-1618). He established an affable relation with the Emperor by becoming one of Jahangir's favourite drinking partners. He selected and initiated him among his favored nobles. He describes not only the grand court of Jahangir but also of the Mughal princes and the provincial governors and that how the manners and protocols at these courts were similar to the majestic court of Jahangir. Roe often contrasts the courtly behaviour of the men at the Mughal court with that of the English. He was in particular surprised by the gift ceremony. According to him it was against the English etiquette to demand gifts which the Emperor did every day for letting him enter his *darbar* which as per the Mughal court etiquette was an obligation and a symbolic act, to indicate the depressed position of the giver of the gift before the Emperor. Since Roe was one of the favoured men of Jahangir, therefore, he had an opportunity to record the Emperor's life in more details and he notes certain things about him which we don't come across in other European accounts, not even in the Emperor's autobiography. One such information was his fondness for playing cards, and that how he was forgetful sometimes, giving orders to his nobles to do something in his absent-mindedness and then later in his rage, admonishing and punishing them actually doing it. The account also records Jahangir's daily court activities, festivities, the receptions of the Persian ambassadors and others from different foreign lands, and use of animals to punish defaulters, and many other absorbing details of Jahangir's period.

Francois Bernier's *Travels in the Mogul Empire, 1656-68* is an indispensable source covering the latter phase of Shahjahan and the reign of Aurangzeb. He wrote a series of letters addressed to his friends and officials in France, informing different facets of these two reigns. In one of the letters addressed to Monsieur de la Mothe Le Vayer in 1663, he makes a comparison between Agra and Paris and describes the imperial court life during Aurangzeb's reign, the daily routine he followed, the royal paraphernalia, and the rich lifestyles of the *umara*. He also portrays the court life of Aurangzeb's father Shahjahan's time and explains the *darbars*. In a series of letters written to M. De Merveilles, he talks about his observation on the imperial encampment. He also records that how the court etiquette was sometimes used as a means to

terminate the unwanted elements at the court and that how imperial favour led to the war of succession between Dara and Aurangzeb.

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's (a French traveller in Asia, undertook six voyages, which took him as far as the East Indies and Java, and he acquired a fortune in the trade of precious stones) *Travels in India (1640-67)* contains a wealth of information and has been frequently reprinted. He gives an interesting account of the political rivalries, plots at the imperial court, pretence of loyalty of the princes towards their royal father just to gain the imperial favours. He writes, in his first volume, that Prince Khurram by way of submission to his father attained his ends (i.e., to sit on the Mughal throne) more conveniently. His description concerning the details of the Mughal court in the time of Aurangzeb, his style of eating and sleeping, his thrones, daily activities, guarding of the palace, his birthday celebrations, the imperial animals with a special reference to elephants, etc. is very gripping. The second volume is of less significance from the point of my research work as it is full of details regarding the places like Himalaya, Bhutan, Benaras, Assam, etc. However, his details regarding the diamonds and rubies he had seen in Europe and Asia and especially the ones, the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb had, are really fascinating.

A well-known traveller's account of Mughal India, Niccolao Manucci, the Venetian's work, *Storia Do Mogor* is helpful in drawing a contrast between the courts of Shah of Persia and of the Mughals. Since he was in the service of Dara Shukoh, the eldest son of Shahjahan, therefore he had seen the events in Dara's life quite closely. He reveals that how Dara after the battle of Samugarh was suspicious of every man around him and even doubted the fidelity of one of his loyal officials, Daud Khan because of the fragile nature of the service and loyalty in court politics. He also gives an insight into the Mughal camp of Aurangzeb, his courtly life, daily activities, etc.

Another ambassador's account who had come to the court of Aurangzeb is *The Norris Embassy to Aurangzeb, 1699-1702*. Norris arrived in India in 1699 along with his secretary and brother, Edward Norris. He did not have any prior information about India and its people, traditions and culture. In modern days, ambassadors before visiting a foreign country, equip himself in advance with knowledge of the country, unlike earlier days in medieval times. He was not without prejudice and was always comparing the system of Hindustan with that of Europe. He was hyper-sensitive regarding his position: during his official visit to Masulipatnam, the



Faujdar of a neighbouring town, Petipoli, first met the Chief of the Dutch factory. But Norris took this as a slight to himself. When the Faujdar came to visit Norris, he refused to see him. His secretary informed the Faujdar that he should have visited the Ambassador before visiting the Chief of the Dutch factory.<sup>43</sup> His work does not give much information regarding the court of Aurangzeb.

*Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri (Being the third part of the travels of M. De Thevenot into the Levant and the third part of a voyage the world by Dr. John Francis Gemelli Careri)* is another significant travelogue which deals with the power and grandeur of the Empire but also shows that how the nobles, in lieu of gifts, disobeyed the royal orders secretly. Nonetheless, Thevenot was highly impressed by Aurangzeb's daily activities. J. Ovington too in *A Voyage to Surat in the year 1689* in the section 'Of The Great Mogul' gives a brief account of the court of Aurangzeb, the weighing ceremony, court flattery, encampment and the rebellion of his son, Akbar and his subsequent flight to Persia. His report on the imperial animals, particularly that of the elephants and the way they were procured, the allowance of food to them which was stately, their paraphernalia, etc. was useful in understanding how the imperial animals also aided in adding splendour to the Empire.

Fragments of information on Mughal court and life can be collected from Francois Martin's *India in the 17<sup>th</sup> c. (Social, Economic and Political)* who especially takes note of the Mughal trend of making expensive gifts to the Emperor and also to the officials of the Empire. John Fryer's work *A New Account of East India and Persia in Eight Letters being Nine Years Travels* is not of particular help for the reconstruction of the history of courtly culture of the Mughals. He had dealt with political aspect of the Empire, but what the court was like or what were the rules followed at the court by the people attending the *darbar* is not recorded. Perhaps due to the fact that Fryer never visited the court of the Mughals personally, therefore, his observation on the matter is lacking. Nevertheless, he gives a fair amount of information regarding the court of the Shah of Persia which is helpful in bringing out a contrast between the two important courts of the time. One such example could be the description of Fryer gives an impression that the etiquette observed at the court of Persia was less formal.

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<sup>43</sup>Norris Embassy to Aurangzeb, p. 143.

The third very significant and rich source to understand the rituals and ceremonials and their interplay in the functioning of the Mughal court is through examining the paintings commissioned by the Mughal Emperors. For this I have heavily relied on the Mughal paintings displayed at the National Museum Library of New Delhi. The illustrations which one can find in Persian sources such as *Baburnama*, *Akbarnama*, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, and *Shahjahan Nama* are quite useful for the students of Mughal history. The paintings executed under the patronage of provincial rulers could also prove helpful to get an additional insight into the matter. The paintings sometimes do reveal some interesting facets which we may not find in our court chronicles and thus give us a fresh clue to modify our earlier notions for not necessarily they corroborate written accounts of the time. Below are some paintings which I have utilized for my further understanding of the topic.

- Mughal Emperor Akbar receiving gifts, Mughal, Akbar period, circa A.D. 1590, Paper, 21.5 x 15.5 c.m.

In the painting, all the Mughal nobles are shown standing and holding gifts to give Akbar as an offering who made it customary for all to bring gifts for him as a court ritual. The gifts offered in the form of goods, animals, etc., were called *peshkash* while the offering of coins to the Emperor was known as *nazr*. The number of nobles assembled is not very striking; they are not more than nine in number. The place where Akbar sits is surrounded by a wall, outside which the armed men are seen standing with military equipments. As per the court norm he is sitting on an elevated platform. One thing is to be noticed that Akbar is seen here extending his hands to take gifts directly from one of the standing nobles. But in many European as well as in Persian accounts we read that the Emperor never received gifts from anyone directly. There was an officer especially appointed for this task. Jahangir in his memoirs calls him *Mir-i-Tuzuk* (Master of Ceremony). Also to be noted that the painting was completed in 1590 i.e., in the later phase of Akbar's reign and many of his innovations in courtly norms and protocols were already introduced. Probably the court rules were still developing and supple.

- Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) hunting; Mughal, Akbar period, Paper, 32 x 19 c.m.

Hunt was one of the royal prerogatives and there were several methods of hunting animals. Akbar was especially innovative in the application of the modes of hunting. Here in the painting he is seen hunting with his trained leopards.

- Mughal Emperor Shahjahan on a Royal Elephant

The Emperor mounting an animal was also an indicator of his royal status. The animal had to be from the '*khasa*' category which was considered to be the best type. They were differentiated from the other animals by their paraphernalia, the attendants, their modes of transportation when the Emperor was encamping, their allowance of food, etc.

- Mughal Emperor Shahjahan in the marriage procession of his eldest son Dara Shikoh, Awadh, Provincial Mughal, circa A.D. 1740-50 Paper, 43 x 32 c.m.

The painting celebrates Dara Shukoh's (the eldest son of Shahjahan) marriage to Nadira Begum which was took place on 12 February 1633. The bridegroom's procession, marked by extravagant display of riches and splendour, going to the bride's home for the wedding, is essentially a Hindu cultural practice which gradually seeped into Mughal ceremonials. The painting fully confirms to the details we acquire from contemporary Persian accounts regarding the procession. In the painting Dara is seen accompanied by a group of other princes and important Mughal dignitaries such as Prince Shah Shuja and Murad Bakhsh, Asaf Khan, and others mounted on horses which were richly decorated while others were walking. There is another Mughal painting dealing with the same theme of Dara's marriage wherein he is shown being received by Shahjahan on the terrace in front of the Hall of Private Audience (*Diwan-i-Khas*) of the Akbarabad Fort. This is important because *Diwan-i-Khas* was one of the two Mughal courts wherein only princes, significant nobles and in some cases, foreign ambassadors were given audience. The receiving of the prince on the terrace in front of this court implied the great importance of the occasion.

- Dara Shikoh viewing Acrobats; Eldest son of Mughal Emperor Shahjahan Mughal, Shahjahan period, circa A.D, 1640-50, Paper, 56 x 34.7 c.m.

The eldest son of the Emperor, Shahjahan, Dara Shukoh is shown viewing acrobats through a balcony of a structure which was actually one of the royal prerogatives. Perhaps this was organised when he was at his personal court for the Emperor Shahajahan is nowhere to be seen

in this painting. Below the balcony are some nobles standing and watching the performance of the acrobats. The acrobats are shown in various outstanding poses. Mughal forms of entertainment were a royal extravaganza and they also expressed the exclusivity of the Emperor and only on a few chosen one this privilege was showered. Viewing acrobats, gladiatorial-fights and animal-fights especially elephant-fights was a royal prerogative. Jahangir in his memoirs mentions of issuing a *farman* to strictly prohibit the princes and the provincial nobles from infringing upon royal prerogatives of the Mughal Emperor in which prohibition on organising elephant-fights was one of them. Therefore, the permission granted to Dara to view acrobats highlights the fact that Dara was the recipient of special imperial favour and he received many other privileges too. Shahjahan Nama records that on the eve of the celebration of Shahjahan's lunar weighing on 15 Feb 1655, he granted the heir-apparent, Dara Shukoh with the title of Shah Buland Iqbal ("King of High Fortune"). He also gave him a golden chair which was placed adjacent to the throne for him to sit on.

- The court of the Emperor Shah Alam II (1759-1806), Mughal, Shah Alam period, circa A.D 1800-10, Paper, 24 x 21 c.m.

It depicts a grand court, flooded with enormous bright light, and hugely crowded with nobles and foreign visitors; all standing as per the position allotted to them while the Emperor is seated on an elevated platform under a massive canopy. In the painting, the stature of all men except the Emperor is dwarfed. The whole court is decorated with beautiful carpets. It instantly and successfully strikes a sense of awe and admiration on the onlooker. The court splendour is well projected through this particular painting done in Shah Alam's period. But interestingly, by his time the Mughal Empire was in its twilight phase and the decay of the royalty was evident. Muhammad Umar in *Muslim Society in Northern India during the Eighteenth century* who describes the several ways through which the decadence in the Mughal rituals and ceremonials crept into which in turn led to the fall in the court splendour. There were incessant examples of lapses and defiance in the observation of the court norms. He gives examples from *waqa'i 'Alam Shahi*, contemporary Mughal account of the Emperor's reign to show the frequent breach of etiquette at the court. There were cases of the Emperor being contradicted and rebuked in foul language by the Maratha chiefs. Nonetheless, the painting gives just an opposite image of the court of the Emperor, Shah Alam Sani II. Perhaps through the depiction of a grand splendour, the Emperor was trying to give a brighter picture of his reign.

- Bhao Singh receiving sword of honour from Prince Muazzam son of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, Bundi, Rajasthan, circa A.D. 1690-1700, Paper, 27x31 c.m.

The painting shows the princes of the Mughal Empire imbibing several of the functions performed by the Mughal Emperor at the court. Their court was a replica of the grand imperial court where from sitting and standing arrangements to modes of salutations and other protocols were all in conformity to those practiced at the royal court of the Emperor. Here Prince Muazzam is seen granting a sword of honour to one of his nobles at his court.

### **Organisation of the Study**

The thesis is divided into three chapters followed by a conclusion:

Chapter one discusses the Mughal court in the peripatetic phase of Babur and Humayun very briefly as it is already covered in the introduction, followed by the court of the succeeding Emperors (from Akbar to Aurangzeb) and the interaction between the Emperor and other members of the court through a series of rituals and ceremonials at the court like the exchange of gifts, awards of ranks and titles, etc. It also shows the employment of the rituals and ceremonials to foster a relationship between the Emperor and his subjects.

Chapter two attempts to examine that how through the means of hunt, music, and other modes of royal amusements, the Emperor expressed his authority over the subjugated Rajas, *zamindars*, and provincial governors of the Empire as well as over his subjects. The chapter also examines the Emperor's on and off relationship with one of his royal prerogatives, the hunt. Furthermore we see that how the Mughal court society not only encouraged the hierarchy of men who were at the service of the Emperor but of animals too and just as the Mughal officials were granted titles, ranks, paraphernalia, and privileges, the animals were also treated in a similar manner.

Chapter three looks at various dimensions of rituals and ceremonials practised at the Mughal court and beyond the court which the Emperor employed as a tool for the subjugation of his men so as to keep his position elevated and that how they were a handmaiden of the Emperor in his endeavour to realise the state ideologies and to generate an elect class of men who were entirely faithful to him. Besides it also seeks to understand the correlation between the imperial

service, favour and honour; the responses of the favoured and non-favoured classes and at last, what were the implications of the employment of rituals and protocols.

*CHAPTER 1*

*COURT*

The term court<sup>44</sup> means 'a the residence, retinue, and courtiers of a sovereign. b sovereign and councillors, constituting the ruling power. c assembly held by a sovereign.' One of the major aspects of medieval history of India deals with the history of the Emperor and his Empire. The Empire's most important space was the court and it aided him in realising many of his state ideologies and functions.

### **Court in the Making**

As we already discussed in the introduction about the court and the associated rituals and ceremonials under the reigns of the first two Emperors of the Mughal Empire that the Mughal court in the evolutionary phase of the Empire was not a daily affair of the Emperor and the court was held at irregular intervals in matters of an important issue; the rituals and ceremonials though were prevalent but they were not institutionalised and so was the court owing to the unsettled and nomadic circumstances of the period. This shows that for the proper application and utilization of rituals and ceremonials, a proper settled location was compulsory in order to magnify the outcome of an occasion for enacting certain rituals and ceremonials. Now let us examine the court after the peripatetic phase of the Empire gets over.

### **Court Thereafter**

The physiognomy and the real ambience of the court were evident from Akbar's reign and so were the protocols and ceremonials. They too became incredibly and distinctively identifiable from Akbar's reign. In his time, they became progressively more pronounced in character. By the twilight of his period, they acquired a robust and forceful temperament. The Mughal ceremonials and etiquette comprised of *Jharoka-darshan*<sup>45</sup> (appearing of the Emperor at the balcony before his subjects), *tika-ceremony* (the marking of *tilaka* on the forehead of a defeated Hindu Raja by the Mughal Emperor), *tuladan* (auspicious weighing of the King and the princes against gold, silver and other metals, silk and other clothes, perfumes, ghee, grains and other articles on birthdays, both according to Solar and Lunar calendars), daily activities of the Emperor, court-festivals, modes of salutations and behaviour, speech and gift exchange. Akbar

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<sup>44</sup>As defined by the Oxford dictionary.

<sup>45</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 165.



introduced some old Persian and Indian festivals, such as *Jashn-i-Nauroz* (New year's day) in 1582 and the Hindu ceremony of *tuladan* in 1565. Abul Fazl, giving the reason for observing celebrations, writes:

He bestows his fostering care upon men of various classes, and seeks for occasions to make presents.<sup>46</sup>

The custom of weighing ceremony<sup>47</sup> was held twice a year on the eve of the Emperor's solar and lunar birthdays.<sup>48</sup> On his solar birthday, the weighing occurred twelve times against the precious items: first against gold, and eleven times against several different materials. On the lunar birthday of his, the weighing was repeated eight times and this time the first round of weighing was against silver, and seven times against other stuffs. The total valuable goods weighed were in the end distributed among poor people. Jahangir and Shahjahan too twice a year weighed themselves against gold and silver and other metals, and against all sorts of silks and cloths, and various grains, etc. once at the beginning of the solar year and once at that of the lunar as was the custom in Akbar's time.<sup>49</sup> This was one Hindu custom which was continued even by Aurangzeb, though the weighing was held once a year on his solar birthday.<sup>50</sup>

The weighing ceremony of princes were organised too.<sup>51</sup> The princes were weighed on their two birthdays (lunar and solar) and so there was lunar weighing and solar weighing ceremonies. Aurangzeb at the time of his lunar birthday when he was turned fifteen he was weighed against gold. The ceremony was celebrated with great rejoicings. He also received many gifts from the Emperor, Shahjahan.<sup>52</sup> And just as the Emperor was weighed twelve times, the royal princes were also weighed a similar number of times.<sup>53</sup> Besides, this was the only one Hindu custom which Aurangzeb retained. In a letter to his grandson, Muhammad Bidar Bakhta who was the eldest son of Sultan Muhammad A'azam Shah Bahadur, he wrote that though it

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<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>47</sup>The Mughal court chroniclers did not use the term '*tuladan*' for the weighing ceremony of their Emperor. Abul Fazl nowhere writes about it being borrowed from the Hindu custom and also refrains from using this Hindu word. Inayat Khan uses the expression '*jashn-i-wazn*'.

<sup>48</sup>Jahangir and Inayat Khan mention that the weighing ceremony was introduced by Akbar. But it was already prevalent as a royal custom among the Rajput Rajas. Akbar borrowed from them.

<sup>49</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 78.

<sup>50</sup>Saqi Mustaid Khan records the termination of weighing ceremony from the eleventh year of Aurangzeb's reign.

<sup>51</sup>It was during the performance of one such ceremony that Jahangir had for the first time offered wine to his 24 years old son, Shahjahan. Jahangir started drinking wine when he was 15 years old. TUJ, vol. i, pp. 306-5.

<sup>52</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 96.

<sup>53</sup>Prince Parvaiz, one of the sons of Jahangir, on his solar weighing ceremony was weighed twelve times. TUJ, vol. i, p. 81.

was not the custom of the land of his ancestors, yet ‘many needy and poor persons are benefitted by this practice’<sup>54</sup> for the weighed gold and silver and other such valuable commodities were distributed among the poor. Aurangzeb also believed that *tuladan* aided in maintaining physical well-being and it seems the said grandson was not keeping well during the time he wrote this letter to him and hence he gave a series of instructions to him (Bahadur) to get rid of his illness. One of the instructions included the weighing of his body:<sup>55</sup>

...for removing physical diseases and avoiding dangers you should continue the morning prayer which is accepted by God. All erudite and learned persons unanimously agree that to blow on water by reciting ‘*Surat-i-Ilkhalas*’<sup>56</sup> and ‘*Surat-i-Shafa’a*’<sup>57</sup> and then to drink that water is the great and immediate cure (of diseases). Though to weigh the entire body of a person against gold, silver, copper, corn, oil and other commodities is not the practice... If this light of my eyes (i.e., grandson Bahadur) will weigh his body against various commodities, which are mentioned in the letter, fourteen times a year, it will be efficacious for removing mental and physical calamities.

Of *tuladan*, Ovington notices:

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, Aurangzeb was weighed... and if it’s found that he has increas’d in bulk, above what he weighed the preceeding Year, this adds excess of Mirth and Joy to the Solemnity; but if he lighter in the scales, this diminishes their Triumphs, and damps their cheerful Entertainments. The Grandees and Officers of State prepare for this feats, two Months before its approach, what costly Jewels and curious Rarities they can any where meet with, which they present to the Emperour at this Ceremony; either to secure his Favour, or to ingratiate with him for a more exalted station, or Honourable Employ. The Moguls are sometimes weighed against Silver, which has been distributed to the Poor.<sup>58</sup>

All celebrations were solemnized regularly with the same glamour and grandeur wherever the court was, in the capital or on travel. On all festival, courtiers brought for the Emperor the *nazr*<sup>59</sup> and *peshkash*<sup>60</sup>. The Emperor himself awarded valuable gifts, conferred new titles, bestowed *jagirs*, promoted them to high mansabs and increased their allowances. Thus it was

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<sup>54</sup>*Ruqa’at-i-Alamgiri*, p. 78.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 78-9.

<sup>56</sup>Literally ‘the Chapter on Sincerity’ in the *Quran*.

<sup>57</sup>‘The Chapter on Cure’.

<sup>58</sup>Ovington, p. 110.

<sup>59</sup>Offering of coins.

<sup>60</sup>Tribute paid in kinds to a superior.

an occasion for the Emperor to recognize the services of nobles rendered during the period preceding a festival.

The imperial court used to be held in the imperial capital, but when the Emperor left the capital for a long time, the court and central government moved with him. When the court moved along with the Emperor, the nobles, provincial governors and tributary and independent rulers of neighbouring states had to come and pay homage to the Emperor. Fatehpur, Agra and Lahore served as capital cities during the Mughal rule. The section of the royal palace where the Emperor held his court was known as *Diwan-i-Am*. At Fatehpur Sikri the building of *Diwan-i-Am* is a large courtyard with galleries on all sides. On the eastern side is a balcony of red stones which is eight feet high from the ground and here the throne of the Emperor was deposited. In the *Diwan-i-Am* there were two railings of wood, inside the first railing only high nobles and ambassadors were allowed; while in the second were admitted inferior ambassadors and *Ahdis*.<sup>61</sup> Outside the railings stood the servants of nobles and other people. Jahangir to make a distinction between these two railings<sup>62</sup> made the first with silver and placed the statues of elephants on both sides of the balcony (*jharoka*). The staircase of the balcony and the wooden statues of elephants were covered with silver.<sup>63</sup> Inside the silver railing all nobles were placed according to their status. *Wazirs*, *bakhshis* and other government officials presented the cases of their departments for decision. All matters of appointments, promotions, increments, award of *jagirs* (fiefs), bestowal of gifts and plans for expeditions were discussed and decided.

The court was specially decorated on occasions of *Nauroz*<sup>64</sup>, on the Emperor's solar and lunar birthdays when the weighing ceremony (*tuladan*) was held on the birth of royal children at *Id* festivals, on the arrival of foreign ambassadors, on the festivals of *Dashera* and *Diwali*, at the celebration of some conquest or victory or on the Emperor's recovery from illness. On such occasions the Emperor or some high official of the state supervised the decoration of the court. The recovery of the Emperor, princes and princesses from illness was celebrated with festivities. A grand feast was given to nobles, alms and charity were distributed generously.

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<sup>61</sup>The Mughal Emperors had an army of retainers directly under the command of the Emperor. These gentlemen troopers served the Emperor in individual capacity. They were called *yaka* i.e. single. Akbar gave them the name of *Ahadi*, meaning monotheist. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>62</sup>Manucci gives an account of three railings at the court: golden, silver, and wooden. Inside the golden railings only princes were allowed. The gap between the silver and wooden railings stood the nobles. Outside the wooden railing stood well equipped horses and elephants and soldiers, Manucci, vol. i, pp. 88-9.

<sup>63</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 242.

<sup>64</sup>In Achaemenid time the official year began with *Nauroz*. The Sassanid rulers celebrated it with public festivities. During the time of 'Ababsids' rule it was introduced at the court with other Persian festivals.

When prince Salim recovered from pimples and princess Jahanara from serious burns (1644) their *jashn-i-sihhat* were celebrated in a befitting manner. Shahjahan gave diamonds and precious stones to the deserving people on Jahanara's recovery. He awarded robes of honour (*khilat*) to the royal ladies, princes and nobles. On the ninth day of the *jashn*, the royal palace and both banks of the river were illuminated. Physicians especially were awarded on this occasion. Arif, a royal servant whose ointment caused the recovery of Jahanara, was weighed against rupees and awarded a robe of honour, horses and elephants.

Abul Fazl gives a detailed description on the daily activities of Akbar.<sup>65</sup> Akbar altered his routine on only a few days during the whole span of his reign. Jahangir strictly followed his routine: "Even in the time of weakness", he writes, "I have gone every day to the *Jharoka*, though in great pain and sorrow, according to my fixed custom."<sup>66</sup> Shahjahan's illness<sup>67</sup> disrupted his well-defined routine and resulted in civil war and the loss of the throne. Alamgir, well aware of this fact, rarely missed his routine in spite of his serious illness.

The daily routine shows the Emperor personally presided over all the business of administration in consultation with his ministers, the *Diwan*<sup>68</sup>, *Mir Bakshi*, *Khan-saman*, *Sadr* and other high civil and military officers. He discussed all political, social and religious problems. Akbar was the first Mughal ruler who regulated the routine on strict principles. Every moment of his time was fixed for some state business. He got up early in the morning and spent some time on toilet and dressing. He got up early in the morning and spent some time on toilet and dressing. After sunrise he appeared in the *jharoka* (balcony) for the *darshan* (audience).<sup>69</sup> This provided an opportunity for the common people to see the Emperor and to present their complaints directly to him. It made him accessible to the people.

He watched sometimes from the *jharoka* elephant fights and other entertainments. After *jharoka darshan* he visited the imperial elephants' stables (*filkhana*) to inspect its condition and management, then he held morning court which was open to the public. He spent four and a half hours conducting the administration and work of the day. He appeared again in full court (*darshan*), in the afternoon and spent four and a half hours there. He supervised the royal

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<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 162-5.

<sup>66</sup>TUJ, vol. ii, p. 14; Roe, pp. 107-08; Bernier, p. 360.

<sup>67</sup>See Bernier, pp. 125 -126.

<sup>68</sup>Equal to *Wazir*, he supervised all the administration, especially the finance.

<sup>69</sup>A.K, vol. iii, pp. 256-57; De Laet, pp. 92-93.

workshops and settled the cases of royal ladies.<sup>70</sup> In the evening *darbar*, the atmosphere was less formal. He held conversation with the learned scholars and enjoyed discussions on various subjects. Sometimes matters of importance were also discussed and settled. He retired to bed after enjoying music late at night.<sup>71</sup>

Jahangir, and Shahjahan followed this routine with minor changes. Roe describes the daily routine of Jahangir.<sup>72</sup> Like his father and predecessor, Jahangir, Shah Jahan followed a daily routine marked by ritualized activities. At his palace in the Red Fort at Delhi, luxurious marble reception halls were created for the emperor's public and private audiences, or *darbars*, which were held each day at specified times. Public audiences included all visitors, while private audiences were limited to those individuals who held the emperor's greatest trust. Those in attendance at *darbars* were expected to follow strict protocol; including taking their appropriate places within a hierarchical arrangement that put the king on his throne at the highest position with those of lesser rank at various levels below him. This hierarchy is echoed in the scene depicted here.

We find in detail the daily routine of Shahjahan which was strictly followed by him. He woke up early in the morning, said his prayers in the palace mosque and appeared in the *jharoka* for *darshan*. He sat in the *jharoka* balcony for two *gharis*, sometimes more and sometimes less. Before the *jharoka* there was a space where entertainments were held: dancing, music concerts, fights of elephants and other animals, jugglers' tricks, reviews of military officials and their soldiers. People presented their petitions to the King without any hindrance. After *jharoka darshan*, he held *darbar* in *Diwan-i-Am*. He went to the *ghusalkhana*<sup>73</sup> or the private audience hall where the court was held by Shahjahan twice a day, once in the morning just after the court in *Diwan-i-Am* and another time in the evening. Here he discussed those matters of administration which could not be presented in *Diwan-i-Am*. From the *ghusalkhana* he went to the *Shah Burj* (King's tower) which was in Delhi, Agra and Lahore. In the afternoon he retired to the harem and ate his lunch in the palace with the royal ladies and took his siesta.

After *Zuhr* prayer (afternoon prayer) Mumtaz Mahall presented the cases of poor and needy women. He awarded them stipends, jagirs and cash. In the case of poor girls, money for their

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<sup>70</sup>A.K, vol. iii, pp. 256-58.

<sup>71</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 45.

<sup>72</sup>Roe, p. 85.

<sup>73</sup>Abul Fazl uses the term *Daulat Khana*, Shahjahan called it *Daulat Khana-i-Khass*. It was also called *Khilwat-Khana*.

dowry was given and their marriages were arranged. He stayed in the harem till "Asr prayer, which he said in the mosque and then came again to the *ghusalkhana*. Sometimes he reviewed the royal guard. In the evening the *ghusalkhana* was illuminated and he enjoyed music and witnessed deer fights.

After *Isha* prayer, he retired again to the Shah Burj where *bakhshis* and chief *wakil* presented the remaining important cases. From here he retired to harem, had dinner and listened to music for nearly an hour. On Friday there was no court and the day was observed as a holiday.<sup>74</sup>

He closely safeguarded his royal prerogatives. It was only the Mughal Emperor who could inflict capital punishment. The provincial governors had to first seek the Emperor's permission before announcing this punishment to anyone; '...therefore when any man deserves death, a courier is despatched to know his pleasure, and they fail not to put his orders in execution as soon as the courtiers comes back.'<sup>75</sup>

Celebrations and feasts had always been a vital aspect of any monarchical state; in fact not of any kingdom but they have been indispensable to any religion or culture. The reports of any Kingdom often contained records regarding such events wherein the highlight had always been to exaggerate, to focus on the rarities, expensive stuffs, the number of participants, the place where it was celebrated, etc. was to demonstrate the wealth and status and to carve out a unique identity of the kingdom and its ruler. They were often used in the service of the kings so as to channel the flow of authority and power and to optimize the status of the elites. Therefore, the celebrations and feasts had a special place. 'Rulers search for opportunities for a feast', writes Abul Fazl, 'and make an occasion for liberality and forgiveness.'<sup>76</sup>

Jahangir had enthusiastically recorded the gifts he had received and those he gifted to others. He had also recorded the value of the gift taken and given. He had especially talked about the rarities of the gifts received. On *Nauroz*, Raja Bir Singh Deo brought a white cheetah to him...'I had never seen a white cheetah'.<sup>77</sup> Daulat, the head of the village of Jigri, brought some uncommon flowers, 'such as I had never seen in my life'.<sup>78</sup> Yet on another occasion, one of his nobles, Murtaza Khan, gifted Jahangir a ring of which he commented, 'Till that day no one had

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<sup>74</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, pp. 146-153.

<sup>75</sup>Thevenot and Carreri, vol. iii, p. 74.

<sup>76</sup>A.K, vol. iii, p. 74.

<sup>77</sup>TUJ, vol. I, pp. 138-39.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 138-39.

ever heard of such a ring having come to the hands of any sovereign.<sup>79</sup> When the gift exchanged between the two parties of equal status, the economic value of the gifts too had to be of equal value. Whereas when the gift was exchanged between unequal parties, it was then a compulsion for the subordinate to give the gift of superior value. A robe of honour or *khilat* was one of the most significant categories of gifts given by the Emperor. It consisted of three, five, six or seven pieces. The *khilat* of three pieces consisted of a turban, a long coat with *jama* (skirt) and a *kamarband* (belt for the waist). The *khilat* of five pieces consisted of a *sarpech*, a band to tie round the short sleeve known as *nim-astin* (half-sleeves). The *khilat* of seven pieces consisted of a turban, a *Qaba* (gown), a fitting coat, two pairs of trousers, two pairs of trousers, two shirts, two girdles and a scarf for the head/ neck.<sup>80</sup> The *khilat* had a special small room where they were stored and obtained as per the wishes of the Emperor to honour someone. This wardrobe was known as the *Toshakhana*.<sup>81</sup> Then there was the *Daghi* (a warm mantle) and *Fathi* dresses which were awarded. Akbar gave them after the fall of Bairam Khan on Atka Khan.<sup>82</sup> The *saropa* was a dress consisting of all clothes from head to foot.

There was another kind of a robe called the *Nadiri* which was the innovation of Jahangir.<sup>83</sup> Robes of honour were distributed twice a year, in winter, and in the rainy season besides on other occasions.<sup>84</sup> It was regarded as a great honour when the Emperor bestowed his own dress on somebody.<sup>85</sup> The person who received the robe of honour was to come to the court wearing it for three days. It distinguished the recipient of the honour from the others at the court. Recipients of the *sarpech* were not allowed to wear it on any day except Sunday. They were forbidden to make a similar *sarpech* for daily use.

For decoration of the turban there were different kinds of sigrettes known as *kulghi* or *jigha*. As an honour *jigha* or *kulghi* were awarded to the nobles of the court in recognition of their services. It was considered a great honour when sometimes the Emperor awarded his own turban to a noble.

Rings of diamond, ruby, emerald and sapphire were given as a gift to princes and nobles. The Mughal Emperors used to send their agents and envoys to different parts of India and foreign

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<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 132-33.

<sup>80</sup>Tavernier, p. 18.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>82</sup>A.K., vol. ii, pp. 174-75.

<sup>83</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 384.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>85</sup>Manucci, vol. ii, p. 469; Roe, p. 334.

countries in search of rare and precious stones and jewels. The giving of imperial beasts like horses, elephants, etc. from the royal stable as an award was also regarded as an honour. Jahangir viewed his horses daily and thirty were taken for presentation to nobles and others.<sup>86</sup> When the nobles were awarded great honours like titles, high mansabs or received promotion to a high post or command, they were mostly awarded in addition jagirs and an elephant along with its equipment and ornaments, horses with jewelled golden or silver trappings and costly saddles, jewelled swords and shields. The Mughal Emperors awarded to their nobles and other officials jewelled daggers, bows and quivers, jewellery like *Ponchi* (golden bangles), armlet, *kara* (a kind of a bangle) and pearl necklaces; golden and silver trays, cups, plates, *pandan* (golden betel box) and bottles studded with precious stones, costly shawls of different kinds of *rumals*, *tasbih* (rosary) and perfumes.

Jahangir and Shahjahan started to give their portraits to their nobles as a gift. Simple or autograph letters sent by the Emperor to princes or nobles were received with utmost respect and ceremony. A newly appointed *Wazir* was given a jewelled *Qalam* and *Qalamdan* (pen and inkstand) as a symbol of his *Wizarat*. Books were given to the nobles as a royal favour from the royal library. Jahangir after having finished writing his memoirs *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* for the first twelve years of his reign made them into a volume and had a number of copies made and distributed. The first of these he gave to Shahjahan, who was then in high favour. Apart from Shahjahan, he also gave copies of it to Itimad-ud-Daula, Prince Parwez and others. When visiting Ahmedabad, he presented to some shaikhs of Gujarat, the *Tafsir-i-Kashshaf* by Zamakhshari, the *Tafsir-i-Husaini* by Husain Kashifi and *Raudat-al-Ahbab* by Amir Jamal al - Din from the imperial library.<sup>87</sup>

The offering of betel by the Emperor meant honour and had to be eaten in his presence. However, the greatest honour consisted in partaking of the half-chewed betel of the Emperor. By the end of the seventeenth century, a *pandan* was bestowed as a royal present upon ambassadors and nobles. The Emperor sent some of his nobles a part of the animals which he had hunted. Remaining of the royal meal was sent as a mark of special favour to queens, princes and some of the grandees of the court. It was known as *alush-i-khasah*. The Amir, whose turn it was to guard the imperial palace, was supplied his meals from the imperial kitchen. He received it with due ceremony, performing *taslim* three times turning towards the

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<sup>86</sup>TUJ, vol. ii, pp. 16, 25.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 339-40, 27, 37, 70.



Emperor's residence. He had also to pay *bakhshish* handsomely to the eunuch who brought food to him. In summer, ice brought for the Emperor from the Northern Mountains was given to his favourite nobles.

When the offering of a noble was approved, in appreciation, the Emperor honoured him by promoting or through such other ways. Ratan, son of Bhoj-Hara who was one of the chief Rajput nobles, came to the camp and brought three elephants as an offering. One of those was highly approved and was valued at 15,000 rupees. It was entered Jahangir's private elephants and he named it *Ratangaj*. Jahangir 'dignified Ratan with the title of Sarbuland Raj.'<sup>88</sup>

A gift by the Emperor could consist of anything: robes of honour, jewelled daggers, swords, jewels, expensive clothes, exotic fruits, rare animals... There were times when certain items were demanded by the recipients. Gift-giving was an obligation for the nobles but not for the Emperor. Akbar made it mandatory for all the people (the nobles as well as the petitioners) entering the Mughal court to get a suitable gift for the Emperor. Neither during the Delhi Sultanate nor in the reigns of Babur and Humayun was the giving of gifts to the Emperor recorded as an obligation. Gifts were made by the nobles to the Emperor on important festivities and ceremonies, celebrated at the imperial court. During the seventeen days of New Year festivity in March (*Nauroz*), it was customary for great nobles to invite the Emperor to their house and give choice presents of customary for great nobles to invite the Emperor to their house and give choice presents of jewels and jewelled things, precious horses and elephants to him; of the presents the Emperor would accept whatever caught his fancy and return to the rest to the host. On the eve of Jahangir's fourteenth *Nauroz* celebration, his gifts of the ruler of Golconda, Qutub-ul-Mulk, included two colossal elephants and five elephant-trappings. Jahangir named one of them *Nur-i- Nauroz* (the Light of New Year's Day) since the beast entered the private elephant-house on New Year 's Day. He mounted him and rode him into the courtyard of the palace and also fixed his value at Rs. 80,000, and the value of six others was fixed at Rs. 20,000. Jahangir was very pleased to see the elephant for it 'looked well to my eye'<sup>89</sup>. The second elephant, with silver housings, was also presented with Rs. 10,000 more in various choice jewels. The same day Shah Jahan, along with other gifts, presented the Emperor a *howdah* made of gold, amounting to Rs. 30,000.

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<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 79.

Apart from *Nauroz*<sup>90</sup>, there were the Emperor's solar and lunar birthdays, the weighing ceremony (*tuladan*), the birth of royal children, Id festival, *Dashehra*, the arrival of foreign ambassadors and *Diwali*, at the celebration of conquest or victory or on the Emperor's recovery from illness there was the exchange of gifts. The cash or materials went for *tuladan* were used for various purposes. 5000 rupees from the weighing was entrusted for the construction of a bridge at Baba Hasan Abda. In order to avert the bad omen, Jahangir had himself weighed against gold, silver, cloth and grain and ordered them to be distributed among the deserving and the poor.<sup>91</sup>

Giving of the gift to the Emperor was also a part of the ceremony of receiving the Emperor in one's own mansion. The ladies of the harem also participated in feasts and festivals and gave gifts, of this we will discuss in the third chapter. The exchange of expensive gifts in Mughal marriages became one of the important features. Babur in his memoirs speaks of marriages on several occasions but hardly talks about the gift exchanges between the bride's and bridegrooms' families. From Akbar's period, show of pomp and splendour became a part of Mughal culture. Prince Daniyal, on his marriage with the daughter of the Khan-i-khanan, Abdul Rahim, "received gold, cash and all sorts of rare and precious things in such quantity that he could equip his army from it".<sup>92</sup> On Dara Shikoh's marriage to Nadira Begum, Jahanara (his eldest sister) spent 1.6 million rupees on the celebrations and gifts for princes, their sisters, wives and daughters of high nobles. Nadira's mother too spent 0.8 million on her dowry.<sup>93</sup>

On ambassadorial visits, in appreciation of bravery, courage and good performance, victories in battle, to obtain imperial favour, for promotions and for the grant of a title to a noble, gifts were exchanged. The ambassadors were despatched on important occasions like accession, death of a king, expressing loyalty and devotion, seeking monetary assistance, on festivities like *Nauroz*, birthdays (lunar and solar) of a king, etc. Shahjahan sent Jan-Nisar Khan to Persia to congratulate Shah Abbas II on his accession.<sup>94</sup> In 1629, Shahjahan appointed Mir Baraka as the ambassador to Iran for the purpose of congratulating Shah Safi's coronation and condolences on the death of Shah Abbas- the grandfather of Shah Safi.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Thomas Roe had too recorded the celebration of *Nauroz* at the Mughal court. See pp. 124-125.

<sup>91</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 160.

<sup>92</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 151.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

Before sending the ambassador to a foreign land, he was first adequately honoured. There was an increase in his rank, salary and was given gifts and on the success of the mission he was further rewarded. However, if the mission had failed, the ambassador was blamed for its failure and therefore, was demoted. Before sending Haji Ahmad Said to Rum (Turkey), Shahjahan gave him a robe of honour and a horse, an increase to his *mansab* and 2,000 rupees.<sup>96</sup>

Not necessarily the presents brought for the Emperor was accepted. There were occasions when the Emperor had declined to accept the gifts. Raja Man Singh gave 100 elephants, male and female as offerings to Jahangir which according to him, 'not one of which was fit to be included among my private elephants'.<sup>97</sup> Roe informs us that if the gifts were not of great value or as per the choice of the Emperor, then he without any hesitation would refuse to accept it. It was on this ground that a Spanish ambassador was refused audience within two days of court because his presents were not expensive.<sup>98</sup> He even criticized the gifts presented to him if he did not like them. Of all the gifts presented by Roe to Jahangir, there were two glass cabinets which had arrived in a deplorable condition; Jahangir remarked them to be very cheap and ordinary.<sup>99</sup>

The acceptance of the gift was totally depended upon his wish and not only he accepted or returned gifts as per his fancy but also demanded anything he liked. The demanding of gifts was not restricted to his nobles and people, but he demanded gifts from all those who were allowed to enter his grand court as according to the Mughal custom this was a rare privilege shown to them and therefore, they had to get something for the Emperor of the great Empire. The ladies of the Mughal harem liked all the four hats brought by Roe out of which one was his, so much that Jahangir asked him to give him his hat as well.<sup>100</sup> There were occasions when Roe had entered the imperial court without getting anything for Jahangir, so in order to remind him of the custom of the Mughal court, he would enquire him about the English dogs, and jewels of England. About the jewels in England, Roe slyly to end the topic, commented that they were dearer than in Hindustan.<sup>101</sup>

The gifts brought to the Emperor, if not accepted in some cases were given back to the giver as reward. Rup Khawass, the founder of Rupbas, presented the offering that he had prepared. 'That

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<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 480.

<sup>97</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 138.

<sup>98</sup>Roe, p. 454.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>100</sup>Roe, p. 349

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 394.

which pleased was accepted and what remained was given him back as a reward'.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, Khwaja Jahan on *Nauroz* presented his offering to Jahangir who had accepted whatever he approved of and the rest was returned to him as a reward.<sup>103</sup>

The Mughal nobles too demanded and rejected gifts given to them just as the Emperor. When Roe presented Jahangir a few pictures at *Diwan-i-Khas*, Asaf Khan after looking at the pictures, found some faults in them. On another occasion, Roe had gifted Asaf Khan a pair of English gloves and a sleeping cap. Asaf Khan had returned him the English gloves, saying that they were of no use to him.<sup>104</sup> Roe, on Jahangir's birthday, had presented him a book of maps which Jahangir accepted at that time but later sent him back, saying that no one could read or understand it.<sup>105</sup>

On receiving gifts from the Emperor, certain obligations were to be fulfilled by the recipient in the form of proper salutations and the observation of such other forms of court etiquette. These were an expression of thanks-giving to the Emperor for honouring him. The nobles when receiving the gifts sent by the Emperor outside the Mughal court too had to abide by the prescribed norms of accepting the gift. Abul Fazl speaks of two kinds of salutations which were prevalent during Akbar's time. One was *taslim* (literally submission) was a higher form of salutation than *kornish*. Regarding *taslim*, 'the regulation is that favoured servants place the back of their right hand on the ground and then raise it gently; as the person stands erect, he puts the palm of his hand upon the crown of his head. In this pleasing manner he makes a submission of himself. This is called *taslim*.'<sup>106</sup>

Another was *Kornish* which was a form of a salutation in which the palm of the right hand of a saluter was placed upon the forehead and the head bent downwards. In the words of Abul Fazl, it signified that the saluter, 'placing his head, which is the source of life's senses and reason, into the hand of humility, has made a gift of it to the sacred assembly, he has thus placed himself in obedience to any command.'<sup>107</sup> Yet another kind of salutation, called *sijda* or prostration was reserved for a few selected ones who were favoured by Akbar by letting them

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<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>103</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 166.

<sup>104</sup>Roe, p. 349.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 382.

<sup>106</sup>*Ain*, vol i, p. 167.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 166-67.

observe it.<sup>108</sup> Of this form of salutation, Badauni remarks, ‘He invented a *sijdah* (prostration) for him, and called it *zaminbos* (kissing the ground).<sup>109</sup>

On the occasion of accession of the imperial throne, Shahjahan prohibited *sijdah* substituted it with *zaminbos* (kissing the ground); yet as the one closely resembled the other in outward appearance, the latter ceremony was on this auspicious occasion (on the eve of his solar weighing on 16 Jan 1637) abolished as well, but the three successive obeisance, which were always made as an acknowledgement of any sign of the royal regard, were augmented to four (*chahar-taslim*).<sup>110</sup> The courtiers during Aurangzeb’s reign were ordered to greet each with *salam ‘alekum*.<sup>111</sup> Aurangzeb also discontinued *Nauroz*<sup>112</sup> in 1659. In his letter addressed to his eldest son, Muhammad Muazzam, Aurangzeb rebuked him for observing the terminated festival and called it a ‘heretical innovation’.<sup>113</sup> The Emperor gave two reasons for putting an end to the observation of *Nauroz*; firstly, it was a festivity of the *Majusis* or the ancient Persians<sup>114</sup> and secondly, this was the coronation day of Vikramajit<sup>115</sup> and thus it marked the inauguration of a Hindu era.<sup>116</sup>

Coming back to the gift exchange ceremony, it was one of the important facets of the Mughal courtly culture and was frequently took place between the Emperor and his men. It was often the mode of communication between the Mughal Emperor and the rulers of foreign lands. The moment the envoy had entered the recipient land, his expenses and security became the responsibility of the King of that country, especially in case of a high-ranking visitor or the mission from important land. He was received outside the capital city by the high ranking noble of the empire. According to Mughal protocols of receiving the ambassadors, an envoy was first welcomed with *istiqbāl* ceremony<sup>117</sup>, he was given a robe of honour, some gifts and money for

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<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>109</sup>Badauni, vol. ii, p. 266 ; Fernao Nuniz who wrote probably in 1535-37 A.D, writes that the king of Vijaynagar, Achyuta Raya, “confers very high honour, too, if he permits a certain one to kiss his feet, for he never gives his hands to be kissed by anyone.” Robert Sewell, p. 357.

<sup>110</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 203; Sir H.M. Elliot, Vol. vii, p. 170; Manucci, vol. i, p. 88; Ovington, p. 183.

<sup>111</sup>M.A, p. 13.

<sup>112</sup>Literally, it means the new day in Persian.

<sup>113</sup>Ruq., p. 5.

<sup>114</sup>*Magis* was the term used by the Arabs to denote the ancient Persians.

<sup>115</sup>Vikramaditya, the ruler of Ujjain, defeated a Shaka king. The Scythians, called Shakas in Patanjali’s *Mahabhasya* were originally central Asian nomadic tribes, D.N. Jha, *Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 114-5.

<sup>116</sup>This was Vikrama era, started in 57 BC to commemorate Vikramaditya’s triumph, D.N. Jha, p. 115.

<sup>117</sup>This was an obligatory Mughal ceremony which was a welcoming ceremony. Before the arrival of any high-ranking visitor at the Mughal court, he was first received by an important Mughal noble at a fixed spot outside the metropolis.

his expenditure within the Mughal territory. When Arsalan Agha was dispatched to Mughal India by the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV, as soon as he had stepped on the Mughal territory, he was sent a courteous *farman* and a robe of honour. Khawass Khan, the governor of that province was also instructed to present him with 10,000 rupees out of the state exchequer and 6,000 more as his private gift. Orders were likewise issued for Qazak Khan, prefect of Siwistan, to provide the ambassador with 4,000 rupees on his arrival there; for Shah Quli Khan, prefect of Bhakkar, to provide a similar sum of money and for Najabat Khan, Governor of Multan, to provide 6,000 rupees and to receive him.<sup>118</sup>

After reaching of the ambassador at the imperial court, gifts between the two countries were not exchanged immediately but an appropriate time was fixed and not everything was presented in the first meeting. Waqqas Haji, ambassador of Nazr Muhammad Khan, ruler of Balkh and Badakhshan in the first meeting presented Shahjahan his ruler's letter with choice gifts to the value of 15,000 rupees. Two days after, he presented 35 horses, coats of mail and 10 camels. And sometimes not only the ambassador but people accompanying him too presented the Emperor some gifts. Like the son of Waqqas Haji presented 18 horses and a string of camels.<sup>119</sup>

Gifts were made by the Emperor of the ambassador, by the ambassador himself and by the people who had accompanied him. The gifts of the ruler comprised of choice gifts which included rare, expensive and popular items of their country and this was always mentioned by the court chroniclers. While sending choice gifts, the preference or likings of the King of the other land was considered. The Mughals were very fond of hunting. In 1638 Nazr Muhammad sent his huntmaster (*Mir Shikaran*) along with the embassy to the court of Shahjahan who had brought falcons trained to heron and deer hunting.<sup>120</sup> In 1654 Shahjahan as a choice gifts for Qaisar of Rum through the Turkish ambassador who had come to his court and who had informed him of a raging pestilence at Istanbul sent him (*Qaisar*) an armet of *bezoar* stone (which was believed to have beneficial effect on the nervous system) along with other precious stones like rubies, emeralds, pearls and sapphires.<sup>121</sup>

The Mughals were fond of Central Asian fruits. The French traveller, Bernier (1656-1668) who was at the Mughal court mentions an Uzbek embassy which brought 'apples, pears, grapes and primarily supplies Delhi with these fruits which are eaten all the winter'. Among the other

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<sup>118</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 267.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 500.

produce Bernier mentions are Bukhara prunes, apricots and pitted raisins.<sup>122</sup> The Venetian Niccolao Manucci (1653-1708) calls Bukhara plums 'the best in the world'. He writes that among the list of gifts brought by Subhan Quli Khan's mission of 16661-62 were one hundred camel loads of fresh fruits from Central Asia.<sup>123</sup>

We also come across instances when the gifts were demanded or requested by the ruler of a country from another. Abbas I wished to drink wine from "his brother' Jahangir's cup."<sup>124</sup> The gifts were demanded by the subordinate kingdoms as well. Nur al -Din Quli was sent to Bijapur with a golden tablet on which by Adil Khan's desire a *farman* had been inscribed, investing him with the title of Adil Shah. Besides a robe of honour, a dagger, dirk and a few choice wares of Kashmir for which he had requested.<sup>125</sup> The Mughal nobles too demanded and rejected the gifts given to them just as the Emperor. Roe had gifted Asaf Khan a pair of English gloves and a sleeping cap. Asaf Khan had returned him the English gloves saying that they were of no use to him.<sup>126</sup>

Choice gifts were given by the host Emperor at the time of the dismissal of the foreign ambassador. But sometimes the Emperor had made no effort to choose choice gifts for the King of the receiving ambassador. In 1656 when Shahjahan gave permission to the ambassador of Kashghar to depart, he was given 15,000 rupees to buy products of Hindustan as a gift for his master, Abd Allah Khan. Here, we find no mention of choice gifts given by Shahjahan to ambassador. Perhaps Shahjahan was neither much concerned with selecting gifts for the ruler of Kashghar himself nor asked any of his nobles to arrange choice gifts for the ruler. Instead he entrusted this responsibility of choosing the rare items of Hindustan to the ambassador himself.<sup>127</sup>

Details of gifts received and made from both the sides are mentioned frequently and the total value of gifts was too estimated. Jahangir's memoirs is full of such examples wherein he had always mentioned or estimated the total value of gifts he gave to anyone or he had received from someone. The gift brought for the Emperor by the nobles, European travellers and also by

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<sup>122</sup>Bernier, p. 118.

<sup>123</sup>Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, vol. ii, p. 34.

<sup>124</sup>TUJ, vol. I, pp. 144-5.

<sup>125</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 509.

<sup>126</sup>Roe, p. 349.

<sup>127</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 525.

the foreign dignitaries were first examined to check if it was worthy of being offered to His Majesty. No one could enter the court with empty hands.

Gifts were made not necessarily directly to the Emperor but to any other royal member of the empire. E.g. Raja Budh Prakash of Sirmur wrote the *arzdashts* to Jahanara along with valuable gifts, requesting her to plead his case with Aurangzeb for settling his dispute with the Raja of Srinagar. Some of the things he sent to Jahanara included animals, basket of sour pomegranates, golden winged bird, musk-pods, falcon, boxes of snow, etc. Jahanara, in reply to his *arzdashts*, sent him *nishans*, granting him a *khilat* and assured him of her favours but complained that the musk was artificial and the snow was dirty.<sup>128</sup>

Gift-giving aided in fulfilling a number of state ideologies. The ritual was instrumental in enforcing discipline in nobles. When a person received gifts from the Emperor, the recipient had to perform full salutations before receiving them. The giving of gifts was an acknowledgement of status difference. When the King of Golconda was sure of the imminent destruction of his kingdom, he sent valuable gifts to Aurangzeb and his ministers on a massive scale so as to mollify the Mughal Emperor.<sup>129</sup>

There were certain privileges which were exclusive to the Mughal Emperor. He had exclusive privileges and these royal prerogatives were not to be infringed. Again this denoted his power. Granting of titles to nobles was a sole right of the king. The Emperor could alone confer titles on his subordinates. Amirs and mansabdars could only recommend suitable persons for an award to the Emperor and the latter in his discretion could confer a title he thought fit in the light of such recommendations. Nonetheless, on some cases the queen-consorts confer a title on a noble. We have cases when the neighbouring countries' king made recommendations. The *Munshaat-i-Namakin*, *insha* collection that was compiled during the last years of Akbar's reign, contains Akbar's letter to Shah Tahmasp sent in 1565 rejecting his suggestion to grant the titles of Khan-i-khanan and Sipah Salar upon Sultan Mahmud Bhakkari.<sup>130</sup>

The titles adopted by the Emperors at the time of coronation or after some victory over an enemy were an expression of the power and grandeur of the Mughal Emperors. They were high sounding. Babur was the first Timurid ruler. The taking of the title Padshah was important in

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<sup>128</sup>*Edicts from the Mughal Harem*, ed. S.A.I. Tirmizi, Idarah-i-Adabiyat –i-Delli, Delhi, 1979, pp. xxx, xxxi.

<sup>129</sup>Martin, Francois, p. 1023.

<sup>130</sup>*Munshaat-i-Namakin*, p. 33.



that it differed from Sultan, which was the title of the Osmalis and Shah, was the title of the newly founded Safawi dynasty. Hence this title distinguished Babur and his successors from his two powerful rivals, Osmanli and Safawis. After his victory over Rana Sanga (1527) on the battlefield of Khanua, Babur assumed the title of Ghazi 'warrior of the faith'. Thus Babur was styled Zahir al- Din (Strengtheners of the faith) Muhammad Babur Padshah Ghazi. Humayun adopted the title of Nasir-al-Din (Defender of the faith) Muhammad Humayun Padshah Ghazi. Akbar assumed the title of Jalal-ud-Din (Glory of the faith) Muhammad Akbar Padshah Ghazi. Prince Salim, at the time of his coronation, adopted the title of Nur-al Din (Light of the faith) Muhammad Jahangir (Seizer of the world) Padshah Ghazi.<sup>131</sup> Shahjahan on his coronation assumed the high sounding title, Abul Muzaffar Sahib Qiran-i -thani Shihab al-Din (Meteor of the faith) Shahjahan Padshah Ghazi.<sup>132</sup> Alamgir on his succession to the throne took the title of Abul Muzaffar Muhi al - Din (Rejuvenator of the faith) Muhammad Aurangzeb Alamgir Padshah Ghazi.<sup>133</sup> To call or write the name of the Emperor was regarded as disrespectful. He was referred to by short titles like Zil Allah (Shadow of God), Alam Panah (Protector of the Universe) and Jahan Panah (Protector of the world).

The princes of the royal family were called Sultan. Sometimes high titles were awarded to them as a reward for their achievements or to recognize their position at the court. Prince Khurram, after his victories in Rajputana and the Deccan, was given the title of Shahjahan by Jahangir. During the later years of his reign, when Shahjahan had decided that his elder son, Dara Shikoh, was to succeed him on the throne, he gave him the title of Shah Buland Iqbal.<sup>134</sup>

Princesses were too given titles by the Emperor. Shahjahan gave Jahangir the title of Begum Sahib. Aurangzeb gave her the title of Badshah Begum and Roshanara Begum was given the title of Shah Begum.<sup>135</sup> Queen Mothers were too referred to by dignified titles. Akbar's mother, Queen Hamida Banu Begum, was called Maryam Makani, Jahangir's Maryam Zamani or Wala Niamat Begum. Likewise queens too had titles. Mihr-un-Nisa after her marriage to

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<sup>131</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 3.

<sup>132</sup>Inayat Khan begins Shahjahan Nama with an account of the accession of Shahjahan to the imperial throne. Shahjahan Nama, p. 17.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 558.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 505

<sup>135</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 218; M.A, p. 84.

Jahangir was awarded the title, Nur Mahal and later on, that of Nurjahan. On some occasions the queen-consorts or queen-mothers conferred a title on a noble.<sup>136</sup>

Nobles were awarded titles after they had proved their military skills in war or their proficiency in handling the administrative tasks assigned to them. Like Ghias Beg was given the title of 'Itimad-ud-daulah' (Pillar of the State). At the time of his coronation, a new Emperor bestowed titles on the nobles of his court, especially those who had supported his succession to the throne. The occasion on which titles usually awarded were the festival of *nauroz*, the Emperor's birthday, celebration, Id and other festivals. Occasionally titles were given, on the spot, for some feat of bravery and loyalty. The highest titles which were conferred on nobles were Khan-i-Khanan (the Lord of Lords), Khan Azam (the Great Lord), Khan Jahan (the Lord of the World), Khanzaman (the Great Lord), Amir-ul-Umara (the Noble of Nobles), and Ray Rayan (the Great of Greats).

Since many of the nobles in the Mughal court were military generals and fought frequently on battlefields, therefore, they were awarded titles according to their performances in wars like the titles of Shahbaz Khan (Brave), Mahabat Khan (Awe), Lashkar Khan (Army). Titles were granted for some feat of bravery and loyalty. For instance, Anup Ray, who fought against a tiger and saved the life of the Emperor, was given the title of Sang-dalan (Crusher of the Lion)<sup>137</sup>. Ali Quli Istanjlu, in the service of prince Salim, when he attacked a lion and killed it with his sword, was given the title of Sher- Afghan (Tiger-Thrower) on the spot.<sup>138</sup> The titles awarded to some particular aspects of their personality like Ikhlas Khan (Sincere), Diyanay Khan (Peity). Their titles also referred to their proficiency in their professional works. E.g. physicians in the Mughal court were given titles like Hakim Masiha (physician like Christ). Sometimes the titles of a person reflected the kind of duty he was associated with, like the titles Naubat Khan (Chief of Naubat Khana).<sup>139</sup> When the Mughal nobles were awarded great honours like when they were promoted or granted high mansabs or given a rank of honour, they were mostly awarded titles. An abstract of the *Siyaha Huzur* stated that Abdur Razzak Lari was

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<sup>136</sup>Tirmizi, p. 19. Nur Jahan gave Mirza Nathan the title of Shitab Khan and a robe of honour. To complete the transaction, Mirza Nathan sent 42,000 rupees to the Empress to acknowledge the superior value of the great favour bestowed upon him.

<sup>137</sup>TUJ, vol. i, pp. 187-88.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111.

granted a mansab of 4000 *zat*, 3000 *sawar* and a *jagir* by Emperor who also conferred upon him the title of Khan and favoured him with a dagger.<sup>140</sup>

The purpose of such elaborate system of codes of conduct, gift-giving, conferring titles, celebrating festivals, and fests, processions and other such activities aided the Emperor to stabilize his rule. *Peshkash* and *nazr* from the nobles reflected the superior position of the Emperor and the subordination of the nobles. Like the transmission of booty to court as stated and demonstrated the relationship of ruler and officer. The failure to send it meant disruption of the relationship which the gift-exchange stated because the *mansabdars* were king's men, the booty they took on campaign was his, not theirs (though in practice, the ruler took only a proportion of booty).

Besides being the reflective of a master-slave relationship, the exchange of gifts, conferment of titles and awards were indicator of the status of the recipient. Some of the honours were reserved only for the princes and nobles of the first order. The *Aftabgir* (Parasol) was bestowed only to princes, for instance Jahangir conferred it on Prince Parvaiz. The *Naqqara* (kettledrum) was bestowed on princes and those nobles who had at least a *mansab* of 2000 *sawars* (holding of the rank of the commandment of 2000 cavalry). When it was bestowed, the person after receiving it put it on his back. It was always given with some reservations, e.g. that it should not be beaten in the presence of the Emperor or at a fixed distance from the royal palace. Even the princes were not allowed to violate these conditions.

Likewise, *Khilat* signified extension of part of the glory, prestige and authority attached to the King's person. Hence the high prestige was associated with it. The *Khilat* was first touched by the Emperor with his palm; or else it was lightly brushed across his shoulder before handing it over to the recipient. A robe taken from the Emperor's personal wardrobe and especially off his person, and given was an extraordinary act of favour in recognition of some exceptional deed of service to the empire.

Exchange of gifts, conferment of ranks of honour, and titles also aided in infusing a sense of loyalty in the Mughal nobles. During Jahangir's reign, the case of Mirza Nathan who had been in Mughal service in Bengal for more than a decade shows that by granting of gifts and titles by the lure of promotions, the loyalty of not only the courtiers was retained but also of those who

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<sup>140</sup>*Selected Documents of Aurangzeb's Reign 1659-1706*, ed. Dr. Yusuf Husain Khan, Central Record Office, 1958, p. 197.

could not attend the *darbar* for a long duration. Similarly Jahangir in his memoirs mentioned that when after the defeat of Raja Amar Singh of Mewar, he sent his son, Karan Singh at the Mughal *darbar*, he made him stay at the palace for a month and each day he pampered him with expensive gifts and that was how he integrated the subordinate ruler of Mewar into the imperial system.

Besides granting titles, robes of honour (*khilat*) in full view of the courtiers on grand occasions not only gave the recipient an incentive to continue showing his loyalty at the court to receive such an honour from the Emperor to show their proof of loyalty to the Emperor. In short, such mechanisms were very important instruments of creating hierarchical relationship, evoking loyalty of the nobles, negotiating nobles' status and means of social bonding

When at court, the relationship between the Emperor and the princes was not that of a father and a son but that of a superior and dependent and the latter had to render their service to the Emperor faithfully. They had to abide by the norms of the court - from the kind of dress they wore to the place of their standing at the court and others. The places of princes and nobles were reserved at a certain distance from the throne. The eldest prince stood four yards from the throne when standing; if he was allowed to sit, the distance of one and one-half to six yards; when sitting, from three to twelve yards. Young princes were given a place nearer to the throne. The Emperor at the court often had one of his sons to fan him.<sup>141</sup> The places of courtiers were at a distance of three or fifteen yards from the throne; when sitting, this had to be from five to twenty yards while others stood from ten to twenty and half yards.<sup>142</sup>

Seats were reserved according to the status of the courtiers. Courtiers stood to the right and left of the throne forming two wings. The place before the throne remained open. Generally one wing consisted of nobles and government officials, the other of '*ulama*' and religious persons. On the appearance of the Emperor, all courtiers performed *kornish* and *taslim* and stood with folded hands indicating their readiness for the service of the Emperor.<sup>143</sup> Poets, artists, musicians, singers, wrestlers and other entertainers remained present to display their skill at the command of the Emperor.<sup>144</sup>

The favourite nobles were allowed to stand near the throne: thus Mahabat Khan and Asaf Khan

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<sup>141</sup>Tavernier, vol. i, p. 88.

<sup>142</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 157; A.K, vol. i, p. 358.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 157. The Mughal courtiers stood putting their hands on breast signifying the posture of, as Abul Fazl writes, *amada-i-khidmat* (ready to serve).

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 156.

stood at the court of Shahjahan on his left and right sides. Jahangir was the first ruler who allowed Shahjahan to sit on a chair at court near the throne. 'This was a special favour for my son, as it had never been the custom hereto fore'. Later on Shahjahan permitted Dara Shukoh to sit on a golden chair near the throne.<sup>145</sup>

Courtiers were not allowed to talk to each other, or speak loudly. Profound silence was the decorum of the court.<sup>146</sup> Nobody was allowed to move from his place without permission. Violation of these rules invited the wrath of the Emperor. When the Emperor took notice of somebody and wanted to show his favour, he just bent his eye-brows or in some cases gave a slide glance. On the arrival or departure of some favourite noble, he was allowed to come near the throne and kiss the feet of the Emperor, who to show his favour, put his hand on the man's back.

To allow someone to come close to the *jharoka* (balcony) and near the throne was a special favour. Prince Khurram, on his return after securing the submission of Mewar and the Deccan Sultanates, was given this honour. Jahangir allowed him to come near the throne, rose himself from the throne and embraced him.<sup>147</sup> Roe was in near-daily attendance in the court and camp of Jahangir for nearly 3 years (1615-1618). He established an affable relationship with the Emperor by becoming one of Jahangir's favourite drinking partners. He selected and initiated him among his favoured nobles. Roe himself, although was not aware of the full significance of the event, became a disciple of Jahangir. In 1616, Jahangir favoured the ambassador by enacting, without warning, the ceremony of initiation. Selection as a royal disciple was a signal honour. Those who wore the tiny portraits of the Emperor were an elect group of imperial servants.

When a new person was presented at the court, he was first instructed by the master of ceremonies (*mir tuzuk*<sup>148</sup>) how to behave before the Emperor and to perform *taslim*.<sup>149</sup> On his entry to the court he was thoroughly searched, then guided by court officials and announced before the Emperor. After performing *taslim* or *kornish*, he addressed the Emperor in a low tone and presented his gifts. If the Emperor wanted to give him a favour, his presents were taken personally and a few words were said to him, otherwise he was unceremoniously

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<sup>145</sup>Manucci, vol. i, p. 88.

<sup>146</sup>Bernier, p. 260; Peter Mundy, p. 200; Manucci, vol. ii, p. 330.

<sup>147</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 277.

<sup>148</sup>Master of Ceremonies.

<sup>149</sup>Manucci, vol. i, pp. 87-88.

dismissed. If the Emperor was angry with a noble, he was asked not to come to the court for certain days as a punishment, because permission to attend the court was regarded as privilege for selected persons. The discredited noble soon tried to win the favour of the Emperor through the intercession of some nobles. Permission to allow him to come to the court was a symbol of forgiveness on the part of the Emperor.

Courtiers were supposed to come to the court in a proper manner. If somebody came drunk, he was punished irrespective of his status. Once Lashkar Khan came to the court of Akbar in a state of intoxication and in punishment he was sent to prison.<sup>150</sup> In the time of Jahangir this rule was strictly observed; 'the Porters smell his breath', writes Roe, 'and, if he have but tasted wyne, is not suffered to in'.<sup>151</sup>

Courtiers also had to come in proper dress. Once Marhamat Khan came to the court of Alamgir in a dress which was not proper, it was noticed by the Emperor and a letter was sent to him as a warning. To come wearing a turban and to leave shoes at the entrance were in the etiquette of court. It was an oriental tradition to appear before a superior wearing the turban and without shoes. Nobody was allowed into the court from the time when the Emperor sat on the throne until he rose. Courtiers were not allowed to come with arms, in *palki* (palanquine)<sup>152</sup> to the red wall (*gulalbar*) of the Emperor, wearing red dress. *Nim astin* (half sleeves) or wrapping their shoulders with shawls.

Rebels and prisoners of war were presented in open court. On their appearance they had the sword put round their neck and their hands tied. The sword was removed by the order of the Emperor as a sign of forgiveness. After Kamran's<sup>153</sup> submission, his followers brought before the Emperor Humayun, Qaraja Khan, leading him with the sword round his neck before the Emperor. When he reached the torch (burning in the *darbar*) the Emperor ordered to remove the sword from his neck. Bairam Khan, after his submission (1560), appeared before Akbar with tied hands and a sword hanging around his neck. The young Emperor united his hands personally. Prince Khusrau,<sup>154</sup> was presented before Jahangir with tied hands and a chain on his

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<sup>150</sup>A.K, vol. ii, p. 384.

<sup>151</sup>Roe, p. 304.

<sup>152</sup>Tavernier, vol. i, p. 81.

<sup>153</sup>Kamran was the second son of Babur.

<sup>154</sup>Prince Khusrau was the eldest son of Jahangir whose mother was a Rajput princess. She killed herself by swallowing opium out of shame when Khusrau rebelled against his father. Jahangir praised her and took her act of killing herself as the way to express her loyalty towards him. TUJ, vol. i, pp. 55-56.

leg from the left side which is said to be *Chingizi* rule.<sup>155</sup> Special courts were held when important prisoners were presented: Alamgir held a special court when Sambhaji<sup>156</sup> appeared before him.

The princes and nobles appointed as the governor of some far-away land placed them at a high risk of not behaving according to the expected norms of the Empire. Prince Murad and Daniyal<sup>157</sup> when away from the imperial capital took to excessive drinking and died due to this evil habit. Aurangzeb started war of succession when he was in Deccan. The favoured ones were preferred to be allotted as the governor of near and fertile provinces.

The nobles had to abide by enormous set of prescribed rules and regulations of the empire. They were a privileged class and so there was a need to distinguish themselves from the common masses. Their behaviour, actions, conducts...were a matter of discussion for the common people. And most importantly, they constantly needed imperial support for the escalation in their status for which they had to prove their loyalty to the Emperor and their social standing again and again.

Correct speech and mode of behaviour were very significant. The author of the *Dhakhirat-ul-Khwanin* has stated that when Shahjahan conceived the idea of conquering Balkh and Badakshan he asked Tarbiyat Khan for his opinion on the subject. That honest man, who had recently become acquainted with the countries, represented without any dissimulation that the Emperor should never contemplate carrying out any campaigns there. As horses and men there were more numerous than ants and locusts, and as Indians would not be able to withstand the snow and cold of the country, there would be no end to the affair. By chance the Emperor also asked Mulla Fadil Kabuli, who was one of the most learned men, what he thought of the project of extricating his ancestral properties from the hands of the *Changezi* princes. The Mulla replied that to make war on the people of that country who were all Muhammadans was contrary to the *Shariat* Law, and would end in loss. Shahjahan was greatly offended and said that if time-servers pronounced such judgments, and *Bakshis* frightened the soldiers about snow

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<sup>155</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 61.

<sup>156</sup>The son of Shivaji, the Maratha leader.

<sup>157</sup>Jahangir ordered that Murad should be called *Shahzada maghfur* (the pardoned prince), and Daniyal, *Shahzada marhum* (the prince admitted to mercy) after their death. TUJ, vol. i, pp. 196-7.

Jahangir gives an interesting account of the circumstance which led to Daniyal's death. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

and cold, how campaigns could be carried out. He sent off the *Mulla* on pilgrimage to Mecca, and removed Tarbiyat Khan from his post of *Bakhshi*. The later thereupon swooned and died.<sup>158</sup>

Aurangzeb put a lot of emphasis on fine speech and bearings and was prompt in demoting the officers if their comportment was not agreeable to him. When one of the nobles, Hussain Ali Khan fought verbally with his (Aurangzeb's) grandson Ma'az-ud-Din Bahadur and without informing Bahadur, reported to the court of the Mughal Emperor. Aurangzeb on learning the whole situation, ordered for the offending officer's demotion and the confiscation of his *jagir*.<sup>159</sup>

Just as it was necessary for the Emperor to religiously give audience to his men and the people, regular attendance of the courtiers was too important and was a part of the court etiquette. Badauni often began to absent himself from the court. In 1580s, he had been granted leave for five months; spent one full year, admiring the beauty of his 'beloved' (a young boy), Mazhar. The excuse he made was sickness. In 1591-92, he repeated the offence and angered Akbar; again he gave the same excuse. Akbar cancelled his *madad-i-maash*.<sup>160</sup>

There were occasions when we see that loyalty was obtained by force. When Mahabat Khan rebelled, Shahjahan sent Darab Khan Mirza to make him come to terms but instead he joined the side of Mahabat Khan. In consequence, he was imprisoned. But again he received the favour of Shahjahan and was made governor of Bengal but Shahjahan kept with himself Dara's wife, one daughter and one son and his nephew as hostages.<sup>161</sup>

On one hand, ceremonials aided in maintaining discipline, hierarchical relationship but it too had a flip side. The lure of rewards, gifts, high rank tempted the nobles to enter into a conspiracy against the reigning Emperor. Aurangzeb bribed Golconda nobles to capture the fort; and Jai Singh against Dara Shukoh.

The superior nobles were always watchful to maintain or preserve the stratification while the low-ranking nobles in their attempt of escalation of social status were ever enthusiastic to grab an opportunity which allowed them such a scope of promotion. The nobles held a high sense of hierarchy or demarcation. *Mir Bakshi* (general of cavalry), Ruh-ullah Kahn, who is inferior in rank to the *Wazir*, one day at the imperial court of Aurangzeb while presenting a petition to

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<sup>158</sup>M.U, vol. ii, pp. 932-933.

<sup>159</sup>Ruq., p. 103.

<sup>160</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 102.

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 452.



him, reached very close to the position allotted to the *Wazir*. Aurangzeb made no remark. However, Jafar Khan (*Wazir*) dissembled for that day on noticing this. The next day when he came to court he moved one foot farther forward than was permitted by the court etiquette. Aurangzeb immediately rebuked him for the negligence of the court regulations. On this, Jafar Khan made a reply that *Wazirs* held the first place, and to show the difference between himself and the *Mir Bakshi*, he had to step forward. Aurangzeb now realized his mistake, however Jafar Khan not to repeat it.<sup>162</sup>

The conspiracies and plots created a lot of uncertainties on the minds of the participants of the court; on who to put one's trust was always a matter of concern. Relying on a wrong person meant putting a lot of things at stake. One of the reasons for the downfall of Dara Shukoh was he trusted wrong men and did not trust his loyal men. Daud Khan who kept following him but Dara kept on suspecting his intention and led astray by the forged letters that Aurangzeb continued to write. Finally Dara wrote a letter to him asking to leave him alone, withdraw from his army and serve whoever he wants to. Aurangzeb then wrote an affectionate letter to Daud Khan, tempting him with very high pay; an offer which was accepted on condition that he should not be ordered to take up arms against Dara.<sup>163</sup>

The expected norms of behaviour and protocols were to be observed not only at the court but outside it as well. Whenever the Emperor went out from his palace, he was surrounded by all the royal paraphernalia such as soldiers carrying regal standards, weapons, and decorated animals like elephants, horses, and camels, and a great legion of his nobles. It was attended by many important court dignitaries, *yasawals* (mace-bearers), *chelas* who were the Emperor's personal slaves, followed by elephants with golden hanging, an embroidered cloth on their backs, some of which bore symbols of royalty and imperial standards<sup>164</sup> like the sun, stars, and figures of a lion or dragon.<sup>165</sup> When the Emperor during the procession rode on an elephant, nobles followed him on horseback. When he was riding on horseback or in a palanquin, nobles followed on foot.<sup>166</sup> The procession was followed by a royal conveyance like the *takht-i-rawan* (moving throne), and other different kinds of thrones, palanquins, and bullock chariots; these were supervised by *Mir-Tuzuk* who was the master of ceremonies. Then came some servants

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<sup>162</sup>Manucci, p. 416.

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 83-4. Under Aurangzeb, Daud Khan became the governor of Patna.

<sup>164</sup>Abul Fazl gives a detailed description on royal ensigns in *Ain*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>165</sup>Bernier, p. 371.

<sup>166</sup>Peter Mundy, p. 199; Tavernier, p. 308; Ovington, pp. 194-97.

carrying trays of valuable items on their heads and ornamented staffs in their hands. *Yasawals*, taking care of the whole procession followed. Soldiers stood on both sides of the road from the royal palace to the designated place.<sup>167</sup>

The processions were a part of many important festivities like marriages, *Id al-Fitr* and *Id al-Adha*, to a mosque and on his arrival to capital from somewhere else. Aurangzeb would go to mosque in procession and we have instances during this time that he was openly defied.<sup>168</sup> We have a Mughal painting depicting wedding procession of Prince Dara Shikoh accompanied by Prince Shah Shuja and Murad Bakhsh, and Asaf Khan on 12 February 1633. The beautiful painting was drawn by a painter named Murar and is one of the many illustrations found in *Padshah Nama*. It is now in England at Royal Library of Windsor Castle. On his marriage to Salima Banu Begum, Prince Muhammad Akbar went in a grand procession on his horseback accompanied by other princes and the grandees of the court like Muhammad Azam, Bakhsi-ul-mulk Asad Khan, Mir Khan and others.<sup>169</sup>

Peter Mundy observes the procession of Shahjahan when he was returning from Burhanpur to his imperial capital in 1632. There were as many as twenty royal conveyances like the *takht-i-rawan*, palanquin, and so on; a thousand horsemen riding in close rank. This was followed by the imperial animals which included around twenty elephants, decorated opulently and covered with velvet; they carried royal insignia. One of the beasts was carrying *amari* or housing for the royal use which was covered with an awning of rich cloth and was supported with golden pillars. It was followed by ushers having golden grey horse. He was accompanied by Mahabat Khan, and Dara Shikoh rode at some distance from the Emperor. All the nobles were walking on foot on both sides. At a fixed distance were armed soldiers with spears in their hands. They were followed by great numbers of elephants belonging to the nobles. The procession created a majestic sight.<sup>170</sup> In all the processions the Emperor was attended by his bodyguards of 500 to 600 armed men, and nearly 300 or 400 matchlockmen.<sup>171</sup>

Princes too maintained their court and tried to imbibe the rules and regulations followed at the imperial court. When Roe went to visit the court of Prince Parvaiz, he carried him a present. 'In the inward courte he satte, high in a gallerie that went round with a cannipe over him and a

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<sup>167</sup>Manucci, vol. ii, pp. 71-2.

<sup>168</sup>M.A, pp. 94-5.

<sup>169</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>170</sup>Peter Mundy, pp. 193-94.

<sup>171</sup>Tavernier, p. 311.

carpet before him, in great but barbarous state.<sup>172</sup> In the court of Parvaiz, he was instructed by an officer to perform the obeisance by touching the ground. 'Coming toward him thorough a lane of people, an officer came and brought me ward I must touch the ground with my head and my hatt off. I answered: I came in honour to see the Prince and was free from the custome of servants.'<sup>173</sup> Like the Mughal Emperor in his imperial court sat in an elevated platform, the princes and the provincial governors too preferred to sit in a similar way preferred to sit in a similar way in their respective court. The rest had to stand in his presence.<sup>174</sup> When Roe at the court of Parvaiz, demanded to come up to elevated platform where the throne of Parvaiz was placed. 'Hee answered: if the King of Persia or the Great Turke wher there, it might not be admitted.'<sup>175</sup>

Unfortunately, towards royal women in particular and commoners in general, the court chroniclers had 'reductionist attitude'. On rare occasions references were made to them. Women were praised for showing fidelity towards the male members of the family. Ramanatha Charite, a Kannada source on Vijaynagar Empire, informs us about the female attendants of an unidentified Sultan of Delhi. It tells us about the functions they carried at the audience hall of the Delhi durbar. There were both Hindu as well as Muslim attendants. The Muslim attendants were called *bibiyaru*. When John Fryer was at the court of a Persian Shah, he noticed that women were not only employed as court-dancers but also as comedians to entertain the Shah 'who by Gefture, Voice, or Shew, are Licenfed to utter things Prophane, Lewd, and Ridiculous to Chaft Ears; only to move the itching Vanity of the Courtiers, including themselves in Obfenity.'<sup>176</sup>

Permitting any of his nobles to enter the Mughal harem was considered to be a great honour conferred on an *amir* as only a few trusted nobles had such a rare privilege and there are instances which show that out of gratitude and as a proof of their loyalty to the Emperor for the grant of such a high favour, the favoured *umara* opted to become impotent. Shah Quli, a noble during the time of Akbar, was admitted to the royal apartments. After the first time he had been allowed to enter the Harem, he went home, and had his testicles removed. From the circumstances, he was everywhere called *Mahram*, i.e. one who is admitted to the Harem and

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<sup>172</sup>Roe, p. 70.

<sup>173</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>176</sup>John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia in Eight Letters being Nine Years Travels*, Periodical Experts Book Agency, Delhi, 1698, p. 267.

knows its secrets.<sup>177</sup> However such a trend was visible not only among the Mughal nobles. Itimad Khan of Gujarat, originally a Hindu servant of Sultan Mahmud, King of Gujarat, was trusted by the latter. The King had allowed him to enter the harem and had put him in charge of the women. It is said that from gratitude, he used to eat camphor, and thus rendered himself impotent. He rose in the King's favour and was made an Amir.<sup>178</sup>

The number of wives the king and the nobles took highlighted the splendour and power of the nobles.<sup>179</sup> Fernao Nuniz tells us that Achyuta Raya had five hundred wives and 'as many less or more as he wants, with whom he sleeps; and all of these burn themselves at his death.'<sup>180</sup> Even the Mughal nobles maintained a huge harem. Ismail Quli Khan kept 1,200 women.<sup>181</sup> Raja Man Singh, son of Bhagwan Das of Amber, had 1,500 wives. On his death, sixty of them performed *jauhar*.<sup>182</sup> Each of them was given separate quarters with slaves, they were also granted a monthly income to care of daily expenditure (jewels, clothing, furniture...). The amount they received indicated hierarchy in the harem as based on the wealth and love of the husband for the wife, they were given the expenses.

On some occasions the queen-consorts or queen-mothers conferred a title on a noble. E.g. Nur Jahan gave Mirza Nathan the title of Shitab Khan and a robe of honour. To complete the transaction, Mirza Nathan sent 42,000 rupees to the Empress to acknowledge the superior value of the great favour bestowed upon him.

### Distance and Closeness

Now let us look at the interplay of rituals practised by common masses of Mughal India and the rituals and protocols performed at the court of Mughal Emperor and how some of them percolated in the rituals at the Mughal court and that how the court norms, celebrations, and rituals were used as a mechanism to create distance from the common people as well as to forge a closer relation with them. Before the Mughals, we do not have any evidence of a formal institution through which the Sultans of Delhi tried to establish a connection with their subjects.

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<sup>177</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, p. 387.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 418-19.

<sup>179</sup> 'Their greatest magnificence is in their women's quarters (or *Mahal*)...' Laet, p. 90.

<sup>180</sup> Robert Sewell, p. 351.

<sup>181</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, p. 389.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

There was no significant interaction seen between the Sultans of Delhi and their subjects. While the Mughals, with the assistance of some rituals, forged a direct and close contact with the commoners. They even borrowed some of the customs and beliefs of the common masses. So what explains this difference in the outlook of the Mughals from the Sultanates towards their subjects?

The Sultans of Delhi came from the Islamic Caliphate regions and therefore, they were not new to Islamic principles and were answerable to the *Khalifa*, the political superior, for their actions. Before them, when Muhammad Bin Qasim gave the Hindus at Sind the status of *zimmis*, the *Caliphal* governor of Iraq, Hajjaj, immediately reproached him for disobeying the sacred injunction to strike off the heads of the unbelievers. Later, he was convinced by Qasim that it was wiser to utilise the conquered inhabitants as *Khiraj-guzars* of the state than to exterminate them ruthlessly.<sup>183</sup> Thus their every action was scrutinised by the *Khalifa* from whom they derived a major source of legitimacy.

On the other hand, by the time the Mughals arrived into the Indian subcontinent in the 16<sup>th</sup> c., who originally came from the Central Asia (present Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), the centralized power of the *Khalifa* was declining. The Caliphal power then rested with the Ottomans who were at constant enmity with the Safavids of Persia because the Persians were emerging more powerful politically and culturally. According to J.N.Sarkar, 'Persia was the France of the east, the radiating centre, the springhead of the culture, thought and fashion of the entire Islamic world'.<sup>184</sup> Therefore, the loosening grip of the *Khalifa* over the whole of the Islamic world and the rise of the Persian power and high culture led to a shift in the sources of legitimacy. Now the inclination of the Islamic dynasties for deriving legitimacy was towards the Persianization as it was considered to be the culture of elites. The Mughals too Persianised their culture and by introducing some Persian festivities and mannerisms, they sought to obtain some of their ways of legitimizing their rule. The celebration of *Nauroz* (Persian New Year), the mode of salutations like *sijda*, etc., thus there were some ways in which Persian culture came to influence the Mughal court culture.

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<sup>183</sup>Anil Chandra Banerjee, *The State and Society in Northern India, 1206-1526*, K P Bagchi & Company, Calcutta . New Delhi, 1982, p. 13.

<sup>184</sup>Bhattacharya, Ananda, 'Indo-Iranian Cultural Heritage in the Context of Sufism', *The Icfai University Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. IV No.s 1 and 2, January and April 2010, pp. 199-120.

Besides, in the Mughal empire especially in its initial period we see the influx of Persians into the nobility and from Akbar's reign the composition of the nobility became more cosmopolitan and homogeneous. The indigenous elements like the Rajputs and the Shaikhzadas became prominent unlike the nobility of the Delhi Sultanate. The Sultans of Delhi were more inclined towards the practice of racial exclusivism. Leaving a few cases they generally recruited the foreigners especially the Turks as the nobles. While the nobility under the Mughals expanded greatly. Due to this characteristic of the Mughal nobility, there was a need for introducing some practices from each section of it so that each section of the nobility could connect themselves with the Mughal empire and render their service to the Emperor faithfully.

Likewise, establishing a link with the subjects and gaining their confidence was another significant way of ensuring the success of the empire. The geographical extension under the Mughals was comparatively enormous. By the late 1600s the Mughal Emperor held supreme political authority over a population numbering between 100 and 150 millions and lands covering most of the Indian subcontinent (3.2 million square kilometres). The Mughal India far outstripped in sheer size and resources its two rival early modern Islamic empires – Safavid Persia and Ottoman Turkey. The Mughal Emperor's lands and subjects were comparable only to those ruled by his contemporary, the Ming Emperor in early modern China.<sup>185</sup> And the Emperor's job did not stop after the occupation of the territories. Acquiring the acceptability of the conquered people was yet another important and difficult task they had to take care of.

The Mughals did not have much trouble in adjusting themselves according to the social customs of the conquered land because they inherited quite a flexible culture from their ancestors. Babur, from his father's side, was related to Timur and from his mother's side, to Chingiz Khan. When he conquered Hindustan, he brought the traditions of Turko-Mongol along with him which was eclectic and elastic. Babur inherited the *Yasa-i-Chingezi* or laws of Chingiz Khan which was based on tolerant principles and required the ruler 'to consider all sects as one and not to distinguish them from one another.'<sup>186</sup> Timur too is reported to have respected all religions alike. This eclectic tradition was continued by the Mughals and since the time of the formulation of the empire, the emphasis was put on respecting the social customs and manners of the land.

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<sup>185</sup>Richards, J.F, *The New Cambridge History Of India The Mughal Empire*, , Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, First South Asian Edition, 1993, p. 1.

Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, lived in Hindustan just for four years [1526-1530] as he died soon after conquering Hindustan. But he did not hesitate to deviate from the basic beliefs of Islam and enact something which was totally intelligible in Hindu cultural ambience. According to Harbans Mukhia, in 1530, the year when he died, his eldest son, Humayun fell severely ill with no hope of recovery. Then Babur did something the 'very anti-thesis of Islam'.<sup>187</sup> He circumambulated the sick bed of Humayun thrice, announcing that he would give away his life in exchange for his son's. As per the account of Gulbadan Bano Begum, the daughter of Babur, Humayun after this episode recovered miraculously while Babur's health declined and finally he died in the same year. This act of transference of life is considered sacrilegious in Islam but not in the context of Hindu cultural ethos. Mukhia says that the strikingly unselfconscious manner of enacting the episode, as well as of its recording, is the most eloquent testimony to the quiet cultural seepage, even in such a brief period of unsettled times.<sup>188</sup>

Babur in his will, advised Humayun to follow a policy of religious tolerance and to treat all communities alike for a smooth running of the state. He particularly advised Humayun to abstain from sacrificing cows, so that he could win the hearts of the people of Hindustan so that they would not deter from joining the imperial services. Besides, gaining the loyalty of the subjects was always important to the Mughal Emperors. When Babur went to Bengal, he observed that the people of Bengal owed their loyalty to the throne and not to the ruler's person. Anyone who acquired the throne of Bengal became the ruler and automatically, people obeyed him.<sup>189</sup> Babur detested this custom of Bengal wherein anyone could replace the ruler and gain people's support. He wanted people's allegiance to the person of the Emperor and not to the throne. And to do that the Emperor had to adopt some means to evoke loyalty of the subjects towards him.

There was also a special emphasis on obtaining the goodwill of a particular section of the society. Humayun, who stayed in exile in Persia for fifteen years [1540-55], is reported to have advised his son, Akbar, to establish cordial relations with the Rajputs. Humayun himself introduced some Rajput rituals to enhance the concept of kingship, e.g. the *tika* ceremony and

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<sup>187</sup>Mukhia, Harbans, pp. 147-48.

<sup>188</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>189</sup>Satish Chandra, *Medieval India From Sultanat to the Mughals*, Part Two, Mughal Empire (1526-1748), Har-Anand Publications Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2008, p. 64.

*tuladan*. Therefore, it can be argued that since the very beginning of the empire, there was an emphasis on striking a friendly chord with the population of Hindustan.

Akbar too recognised this fact very clearly that the Mughal Government could not function in isolation. The support of the Hindu population was indispensable for the imperial office. 'All minor posts connected with the assessment and collection of the land revenue and with accounts of public and state finance generally were filled by Hindus'.<sup>190</sup> He also could not let go of the advice of his father to include the Rajputs into the imperial service for once they take the oath of loyalty for someone, they defend it till the death.

On his accession, he was troubled by rebellions of the Uzbeks and by his half-brother, Mirza Hakim [1567]. He realized that it was important to put a check on the nobles. He started recruiting the Rajputs, Shaikhzadas, and people from various other communities, giving a composite [multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-regional] character to Mughal nobility so that he could play one faction of the nobility against the other whenever it was required for the stability of the Empire.

Soon he also realized that the glorification of the Emperor was an important way of evoking loyalty from his nobles as well as his subjects. He started adopting several ways to assume divine status for himself. He started taking titles like *Mujaddid-i-alfi-i-thani* (reformer at the beginning of the second millennium), *Insan-i-kamil* (the Perfect Man), *Sahib-i-zaman* (Lord of the Times). H. Beveridge, who translated the *Akbarnama*, opines that Akbar liked the *takbir*, '*Allahu Akbar*' so much for its ambiguity (for it may mean, "*God is Great*", or "*Akbar is God*") that he got this expression inscribed everywhere - on coins, the imperial seals, and the heading of books, *farmans*, etc.<sup>191</sup>

Before him, like the Sultans of Delhi in order to increase the prestige of the sovereign, never went beyond calling themselves the Vice-regent of God or the Shadow of God (*Zil-i-allah*). Whereas Akbar claimed himself to be the Light of God (*Farr-i-izdi*), that he was not just the Shadow of God. This was an attempt to show that the divine characteristics he possessed were far greater than the Sultans had. Abul Fazl's theory of kingship supported this concept of His Majesty, according to which 'kingship is a light emanating from God and a ray from the Sun...It (Royalty) is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of anyone and

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<sup>190</sup>Shri B. N. Pande, *Islam and Indian Culture*, Part 1, Khuda Baksh Memorial Annual Lectures Series, 1985, p. 6.

<sup>191</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p.175.



man in the presence of it bends the forehead of praise towards the ground of submission'<sup>192</sup>. This theory of Abul Fazl was in sync with the concept of the *Suryavanshi* clan of the Rajputs who derive their origin from the sun<sup>193</sup>. So Abul's concept of sovereignty was not alien for the Rajputs or the Hindus in general to accept. Further, he attributed the dispensation of justice as one of the vital functions of a king and that a king was a father to his subjects. So between a king and his nobles and subjects, there was a relationship of a father and son and the state under Akbar was patrimonial in character<sup>194</sup>. Abul Fazl had only one motive in formulating this theory of kingship and that was the full glorification of Akbar, so as to legitimize Akbar's rule, and aid in accepting his nobles and subjects as their supreme lord. Thus his theory of kingship was totally in sync with the state ideologies, implemented by Akbar.

Moreover, the life of Akbar was shaped by the occurrences both inside and outside the court. In the early phase of his reign, he was a firm believer of Islam and practised all its tenets religiously. According to Father Xavier, a Portuguese missionary from Goa who was sent to Akbar's court at the Emperor's request, he even had a mobile mosque which he utilized whenever he was on the move so that he could perform his daily five-time prayers without fail.<sup>195</sup> It was during this time that he was under the influence of one Shaikh Abdun Nabi, whom he appointed the Sadr-us-sudur of the empire. Akbar used to visit his house and attend his lectures on *Hadith*. He even put his shoes in order. But one incident on his birthday changed his perceptions regarding the orthodox elements at his court. On his birthday he got some saffron water sprinkled on his clothes. The Shaikh, on seeing this, flew into a rage (as use of expensive things like gold, saffron, etc. in Islam is considered *haram*), grabbed his rod, (lying close to him) and threw it at Akbar. Fortunately, it missed Akbar by a few inches but the whole incident left him totally shaken as it happened in full view of his courtiers. However, in a state of shock, he could not react at that time. Later he talked to his mother about the incident, but still could not be consoled. With the incident, however Akbar came to the conclusion that orthodoxy should not be entertained at his court. So when Abul Fazl once insulted the same Shaikh Abdun Nabi at the court (he enquired of the Shaikh as to why he was eating food which contained saffron if it was prohibited in Islam and if it wasn't then why had he forbidden His

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<sup>192</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>193</sup>Yusuf Husain, *Two Studies in Early Mughal History*, Indian Institute of Historical Advanced Study, Simla, 1976, p. 111.

<sup>194</sup>Streusand, Douglas E., '*The Formation of the Mughal Empire*', Oxford University Press, Bombay Calcutta Madras, 1989, p. 10.

<sup>195</sup>Nizami, K. A, p. 113.

Majesty from using it?), Akbar felt pleased and soon Fazl became one of his favourite courtiers and thus this was the fall of orthodoxy from Akbar's court<sup>196</sup>.

Akbar, in the history of Mughal Empire, was the one Mughal Emperor who adopted the maximum number of Hindu customs and practices, many of which disputed the principles of the Quran. He married Rajput princess without converting them to Islam, which is not permitted by their Holy Law.

"Do not marry the idolatresses until they believe, and certainly a believing maid is better than an idolatress woman, even though she should please you and do not give unbelieving women) in marriage to idolaters until they believe. These invite the Fire".

*Quran 2:221* <sup>197</sup>

His matrimonial alliances with Rajput princess exposed Akbar to Hindu culture and practiced many polytheistic acts which in Islam are condemned as *shirk*<sup>198</sup>. He performed *Hom*, a form of fire-worship, in the company of his Hindu wives.<sup>199</sup> Akbar was fascinated by the concept of light. He adored the Sun, every morning performed *Surya Namaskar* and every afternoon chanted 1001 Sanskrit names of the Sun, *Surya-Sahastranama* which he learnt from Bhanucandra. His personal shield, one of the important personal arms, depicted 12 signs of the Zodiac (*Rasis*) with the name of each *rasi* inscribed on it and in the centre is the Sun motif.<sup>200</sup> He also had *Surya-Yantra*, made of copper, confirming his belief in Sun-worship. But in Quran prostration before sun/moon is clearly forbidden:

"Among His signs are The night the day,  
And the Sun and the Moon Adore not the Sun  
And the moon, but adore God, who created them,  
If it is Him Ye wish to serve".

(XLI: 37)<sup>201</sup>

Prostration before a human being was also not allowed in Islam. But Akbar introduced *Sijda* (touching one's superior's feet) as one of the modes of salutation at his court. However, he had

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<sup>196</sup>Nizami, K. A., pp. 113-114.

<sup>197</sup>Md. Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Quran*, Goodword Books, New Delhi, reprinted 2005, p. 212.

<sup>198</sup>Illegitimate in Islam.

<sup>199</sup>Ali, M. Athar, 'The Perception of India in Akbar and Abul Fazl', in Habib, (Irfan ed.), *Akbar and his India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, p. 216. Also see Nath, R., 'The Institution of *Jharoka-darsan*,' Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, p. 23.

<sup>200</sup>Nath, R., 'History of Mughal Architecture', Vol. ii, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1985, p. 55.

<sup>201</sup>K. A. Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, New Delhi, 1989, p. 258.

to restrict its observance to *Diwan-i-Khas* due to a heavy protest by *ulema* and other Muslim courtiers who contended that *Sijda* can be performed only before Allah and not before a man.

The celebration of the Hindu festivals is too considered *shirk*. But from the reign of Akbar the celebration of *Holi*, *Rakhi*, *Dussehra*, *Diwali*, and *Shivratri* along with *Eids* and other Islamic festivals became a prominent and a regular feature at the imperial court, barring the period of Aurangzeb's reign. Even the personal loss and grief of Akbar never came in the way of the celebration of these festivals by the state. In 1604, when his mother, Hamida Bano Begum, died one day before the festival of *Dussehra*, Akbar declared the cancellation of state mourning and celebrated *Dussehra* the next day<sup>202</sup>. After the death of Hamida, he performed another Hindu custom; he got his head and moustache shaved. Hindus called this the ceremony of *bhadra* and it was practiced by the courtiers even before he did it. After Shaikh Mubarak died, his sons, Faizi and Abul Fazl, got their heads and beards shaved.<sup>203</sup>

On the night of *Diwali*, gambling was allowed in the palace. Abul Fazl tells us, 'on *Diwali*, on which the Hindus pray to the cow, as they look upon reverence shown to the cow as worship - several cows are adorned and brought before His Majesty'.<sup>204</sup> According to Abdul Qadir Badaoni, who wrote *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, during this time killers of cows were killed. He also says that on the festival of *Rakhi*, Akbar came to the *Diwan-i-Am* with a *tilaka* marked on his forehead, and had jewelled strings tied on his wrists by Brahmans. It symbolically cast a duty upon the Mughal Emperor to protect the Brahmans and his Hindu subjects as *Rakhi* (as per Hindu tradition) is a sacred thread which cast a duty on the person on whose wrist it is tied to protect the person who tie it. The nobles followed him and soon it acquired a court-fashion<sup>205</sup>.

The perceptions of Hindus regarding marriage too seeped into the Mughal household and the nobility. Marriage for the Hindu women was a religious sacrament which binds the spouses together not only in this life but even after death. There was no concept of divorce. While Muslims believe that '*Nikah*' an Arabic word meaning '*contract*' can be nullified. Babur in his memoirs mentions that his sisters, Sultan Nigar Khanum and Khanzada Begum married thrice. Humayun's sisters and daughters were married more than once. His half-sister, Gulchihra, and

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<sup>202</sup>A.K, vol. iii, p. 1245.

<sup>203</sup>Nizami, p. 195.

<sup>204</sup>Nath, R, *History of Mughal Architecture*, p. 59.

<sup>204</sup>A.K, vol. iii, p. 226.

<sup>205</sup>Nath, R., *History of Mughal Architecture*, p. 59.

his daughters, Bakht-al-Nisa, and Bakhshi Banu Begum, were married twice.<sup>206</sup> But from Akbar's period, we see that he advised his subjects not to marry more than once. He believed that polygamy was not suitable for a common man as it affects one's health adversely. Only a king should practice polygamy as he needs a capable male heir to his throne (*Arsh*).

Another influence of the Rajput practices was the introduction of the concept of hypergamy i.e., a girl should always be married into a superior or higher clan than her parent's. From Akbar's reign, we do not find any of the Mughal Emperor marrying their sisters or daughters outside the royal household as the Mughal imperial family in the whole of the Mughal Empire was the supreme family and therefore, marrying their sisters and daughters to any lower family was out of question. During Shahjahan's reign, both his daughters, Jahan Ara and Raushan Ara, remained unwedded till their death. Aurangzeb got his daughter, Zebdat-un-Nisa married to Dara Shikoh's son, Sipihr Shukoh, who was before incarcerated for 14 years by him.

The marriage ceremonies too underwent changes. For Muslims, after '*Nikah*', only '*Walima*' feast is required. Marriage procession, music, and exchange of expensive gifts like in Hindu marriages are not called for in Islamic marriages. But with time, these became a part of Mughal practices. Barat or *Varyatra* in Sanskrit, meaning the journey of bridegroom on horseback to the bride's home, was one of the marriage ceremonies when Prince Salim got married to the daughter of Raja Bhagwan Das Kachhwaha in 1584 and also with the daughter of Raja Rai Singh. Marriage procession was a part of the celebrations too when Shahjahan got his son, Dara Shikoh wedded to Nadira, daughter of Parvaiz (Shahjahan's brother). We have a beautiful Mughal painting depicting this, entitled '*Dara's Marriage Procession*'. There is also one interesting episode about the marriage between Prince Salim and the daughter of Raja Bhagwan Das to highlight the reverence shown by the Mughal family towards the traditions of the natives. When the *Doli* (a covered palanquin) of the Rajput princess departed from her father's place, it was carried a short distance by Akbar and Salim themselves.<sup>207</sup>

The exchange of expensive gifts in Mughal marriages became one of the important features. Babur in his memoirs speaks of marriages on several occasions but hardly talks about the gift exchanges between the bride's and bridegroom's families. From Akbar's period, show of pomp and splendour became a part of Mughal culture. Prince Daniyal, on his marriage with the daughter of the *Khan-i-Khanan*, Abdul Rahim, 'received gold, cash and all sorts of rare and

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<sup>206</sup>Mukhia, Harbans, p. 142.

<sup>207</sup>M.A., vol. i, p. 130.

precious things in such quantity that he could equip his army from it.<sup>208</sup> On Dara Shikoh's marriage to Nadira Begum, his eldest sister spent 1.6 million rupees on the celebrations and gifts for Princes, their sisters, wives and daughters of high nobles. Nadira's mother too spent 0.8 million on her dowry<sup>209</sup>.

Besides, the imperial widows started preferring not to remarry even when Islam encourages widows to remarry. The Prophet himself had for his wives widows with the one exception of Ayesha. This (the refusal of remarriage by the royal widows) was again a clear influence of the social custom of the Hindus who considered the remarriage of widows is a forbidden practice (*Kalivairjyas*). Manucci observes that the widows of even the higher Mughal nobility '*do not marry again though (it is) in no way prohibited.*'<sup>210</sup> It was not only the Mughal emperor who adopted Hindu rituals but his nobles were too not far behind to prove their loyalty to him. The nobles of the Mughal empire e.g., Nathan Mirza during Jahangir's period and Shaista Khan during Aurangzeb's time, performed the Rajput practice of self-immolation, *jauhar*.<sup>211</sup>

But the most important of all the Rajput rituals that the Mughals absorbed which facilitated a contact with his subjects was the *jharokha-darshan*, instituted by Akbar. This meant the appearance of a king to the *jharoka* window to enable his subjects gathered below the balcony to see him. Though the early Mughal Emperors (Babur and Humayun) practised the ritual of showing themselves to their subjects, during their period it was known as *shah-nashin*. Both (*shah-nashin* and *jharokha-darshan*) had a similar function of showing the Emperor's face to the subjects. Babur in his memoirs had talked about it. Humayun too practised it and during his rule also, it was called *shah-nashin*. It was Akbar who had coined the term *jharokha-darshan*, which was a popular Rajput ritual. This change in the name under the rule of Akbar was intentional. *Jharokha-darshan* was the only way through which the subjects had a direct access to their king. The use of the native name for this ritual was more a reliable way of evoking the devotion of the Hindu subjects towards the Mughal Emperor. In the early period of the empire it was not institutionalised. From Akbar's reign, to this ritual was attached the state functions like the dispensation of justice and review of military contingents. It became one of the regular functions of the Mughal Emperor.

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<sup>208</sup> Mukhia, Harbans, p. 151.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 152-53; Also see Richards, John. F., 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir', in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subramanyam (ed.), *The Mughal State (1526-1750)*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, pp. 166-67.

Gradually, we find that the social life of the Mughal Emperor and his household was affected by the customs and manners of the people of Hindustan at large. Akbar altered his lifestyle as per the Hindu sentiments. Monserrate believed that 'in order to gain their (Hindu's) favour and goodwill and that of their castes, he abstained entirely from everything which was the national abhorrence to those people, and looked on it as a mark of special devotion to himself if men shaved off their beards. So that it became a common custom.'<sup>212</sup> 'Both at home and on travels, he (Akbar) drinks *Ganges* Water. Some trustworthy persons are stationed on the banks of that river, who despatch the water in sealed jars... for the cooking of the food, rain water or water taken from the *Jamuna* and the *Chenab* is used, mixed with a little *Ganges* water'.<sup>213</sup> The Hindus revered the *Ganga-Jala*, owing to its religious sanctity. Aurangzeb too consumed *Ganges* Water.

Initially the Mughals wore the colour black/blue on the demise of a close relative as per the injunction of Quran. But when Mumtaz Mahal died, Shahjahan immediately wore white garments to mourn the death of her beloved. (White is the colour of mourning among Hindus). Changes were evident in the daily wear of the Mughal household as well. Akbar adopted a Rajput summer dress, called the *takauchiya* (a coat without lining), with some alteration.<sup>214</sup> Sometimes Akbar used to wear a dhoti, usually worn by Hindu masses. He also wore a turban like the Hindus and unlike the custom of his Turko-Mongol ancestors who used to wear a long hat which was big, heavy and cumbersome.<sup>215</sup> This was in stark contrast to the practices of some of the Arab conquerors who compelled their non-Muslim inhabitants to wear a separate dress in order to differentiate themselves from the Muslim population. The covenant of Umar, the Caliph as preserved in *Kitab-ul-Umm* says: "You (*Dhimmis*) shall be under Muslim laws and no other...You shall wear the *Zunnar* above your clothes."<sup>216</sup> However, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb forbade Hindus from adopting Muslim dress. Nonetheless, the paintings of their periods show that in spite of the prohibition, the Hindus and Muslim nobles wore dresses almost similar<sup>217</sup>.

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<sup>212</sup>Fr Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate*, tr. J.S. Hoyland, annotated by S. N. Bannerjee, Cuttack, 1922, p. 196.

<sup>213</sup>*Ain*, vol. ii, p. 101.

<sup>214</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 172.

<sup>215</sup>Ansari, Md. Azhar, *Social Life of the Mughal Emperors (1526-1707)*, Shanti Prakashan Allahabad & New Delhi, 1974, p. 9.

<sup>216</sup>Choudhury, M. L. R, *State and Religion in Mughal India*, Indian Publicity Society, Calcutta, 1951, p. 316.

<sup>217</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 318.

The Mughal modes of eating too had an Indian touch to it. Before consuming his food, Akbar used to keep a small portion of it for the dervishes<sup>218</sup> just as Hindus would do as an offering to their Gods.<sup>219</sup> Jahangir relished *Lazizah*, a kind of *khichri*, cooked in the Gujarati style. Of all the fruits of the world, he liked the mango the most (a native fruit). Offering of pan which was an important Indian social manner of entertaining one's guests, became a mark of great royal honour presence. By the end of the 17th c. pan was offered to courtiers and ambassadors as a royal gift.<sup>220</sup> Mir Jumla entertained Tavernier and his companions with betel.<sup>221</sup>

There were other instances of upward percolation of the social manners of the commoners. According to Manucci, the Hindus greeted the elders with covered heads and bare feet. This was done out of respect and perhaps it also signified their surrender to their superior. Similarly, the covered head and bare feet was the norm of attendance at the Mughal court.<sup>222</sup>

Aurangzeb's reign saw the mutation in Mughal ceremonials, protocols and daily court activities. During his time, many Hindu practices were banned. Saqi Mustaid Khan, a contemporary historian of this period, who wrote '*Maasir-i-Alamgiri*', tells us that Aurangzeb discontinued the practice of *jharokha darshan* after 1670 or till the 12th year of his reign. He regarded it unislamic as it encouraged human-worship. He prohibited *tuladan* but had to call off his this decision after his sons recovered from illness. He also abolished the *tika* ceremony. But it is to be noted that it was not only Hindu practices that he abandoned but also the Persian elements at his court or things considered unislamic were discouraged. He eliminated *Nauroz* (Persian New Year), one of the major festivals at the Mughal court and the observation of *Sijda* or *Zaminbos*. The Mughal court etiquettes too underwent a changeover. In 1669-70 A.D, Aurangzeb issued a *farman*, ordering that the people should greet each other by saying *Asalam Alaykum*. However, in abolishing these rituals, Aurangzeb was actually trying to seek legitimacy from the Muslims of Hindustan. The events in his life of which we will read in the following chapter, dragged him to taking these measures.

We observe that the Mughal rituals had a multi-purpose. If at one hand, they were used as creating a link between the Emperor and his subjects, on the other hand, it was used for maintaining distance. This was a very unique feature of Mughal rituals as before them the

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<sup>218</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 58.

<sup>219</sup>A.K, vol. iii, p. 342.

<sup>220</sup>Ansari, Md. Azhar, p. 25.

<sup>221</sup>Tavernier, p. 239.

<sup>222</sup>Mukhia, Harbans, p. 103.

introduction of the ceremonials, festivities and protocols was popularly done with the motive of facilitating a gulf between the Emperor and his subjects. Of the 20 precepts Balban transmitted to his son and heir apparent, Prince Muhammad, he advised that in order to protect the royal dignity, etiquette should not be overlooked at any cost; a king should never live a life like an ordinary man, he should adopt ways to distinguish his person from others.<sup>223</sup> In accordance with this, he stressed on the observation of a strict code of conduct at the court. Zia al-Din Barani, in one of his major works, the *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* (a book of advice for kings, how they should rule their kingdom) too emphasized on a strict exclusion of the low people from the administration or any interaction with them.

In fact in the whole of the Islamic world, the stress was on the separation of the two. The *akhlaq* literature (didactic literature, also called mirrors for princes, written mainly to advise the king how to rule, how a prince or a noble should behave...) popular in the Muslim world, too put an emphasis on maintaining a distant relationship with the commoners, that the elite class should not mix with the common people. The most widely read work on *akhlaq* norms during Mughal time was Nasiruddin Tusi's *Siyasatnama*. Akbar had instructed his courtiers to read it. Aurangzeb and his contemporary Safavid ruler, Shah Abbas II, too abided by the suggestions of Tusi. The impact of *akhlaq* literature is evident in their dealings on justice, polity, religion and on norms of governance- in texts like *akhlaq-i-Humayuni*, *Ain-i-Akbari*, the *Mauizah-i-Jahangiri* and a large number of Mughal edicts. Abul Fazl's *Insha* or a letter which was the royal code of conduct and a working manual issued by Akbar to the managers and officials, along with princes, high nobles, mansabdars, amils throughout the empire, stresses that the "they should not mix freely with the commoners"<sup>224</sup>.

Not only in the Delhi Sultanate, this trend of maintaining distance with the common population was widely acceptable but we see a similar mode of thinking outside India too. Louis XIV, the French Emperor in his memoirs while explaining the vital role of ceremonials in keeping a distance from his subjects, says:

Those people are gravely mistaken who imagine that all this is mere ceremony. The people over whom we rule, unable to see to the bottom of things, usually judge by what they see from outside, and most often it is by precedence and rank that they measure their

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<sup>223</sup>Robinson, Francis, *The Mughal Emperors and the Islamic Dynasties of India, Iran and Central Asia, 1206-1925*, Thames and Hudson, 2007, pp. 84-85.

<sup>224</sup>Alam, Muzaffar, *The Languages of Political Islam in India, c.1200-1800*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004, p. 62.



respect and obedience. As it is important to the public to be governed only by a single one, it also matters to it that the person performing this function should be so elevated above the others, that no one can be confused or compared with him; and one cannot, without doing harm to the whole body of the state, deprive its head of the least mark of superiority distinguishing it from the limbs. <sup>225</sup>

One very interesting feature of the Mughal rituals was they had a multi-purpose. *Jharoka darshan* which established a direct and close association with the Emperor, the same was enforced to encourage a distance from his subjects. One of the outcomes of this ritual was the idolization of the Emperor's person which elevated the status of the Mughal Emperor so high that automatically his subjects started seeing him as a divine king and not equal to them in any way. They willingly accepted him as their Supreme Lord in a human form. *Darshaniyas* wouldn't even partake of anything until they saw his face. On Emperor's arrival to *jharoka*, the people gathered below saluted him by performing *taslim* thrice, which signified that they were at his command, ready to serve him. Thus the deification of the Mughal Emperor led to the establishment of a master-slave relationship between him and his subjects and ultimately created a sense of differentiation wherein the former being the superior to the latter<sup>226</sup>.

Further, the court etiquettes e.g. the modes of salutations, giving of gifts, speech, etc too indicated hierarchy. A common man of Hindustan could enter till *Diwan-i-am*. *Diwan-i-khas* in no circumstances entertained a commoner. Only trustworthy nobles could access it for discussing confidential matters with the Emperor. In Mughal culture, we see that deeper prostration corresponded to higher status. A commoner, coming for *jharoka* and at *Diwan-i-am*, performed *taslim* and *kornish*. But the nobles, entering *Diwan-i-khas*, had to perform *Sijda* or *Zaminbos* which was the higher form of prostration. So proximity to the Emperor was only possible through the greatest acts of humility. In *Diwan-i-am*, subjects could not stand close to the person of the Emperor and his *arsh* (throne). The place assigned to them to stand and petition their cases was behind the standing position of the nobility. This was indicative of their position which was inferior to the Emperor indeed and also to his nobles.

Akbar made it mandatory for everyone, entering his court, *Diwan-i-am* to bring a suitable gift (*nazrana*) for him. The giving of gifts by the commoners to the Emperor denoted their (subjects) inferior position and that the gift brought for the Emperor was to be expensive and

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<sup>225</sup>Elias, Norbert, p. 118.

<sup>226</sup>Richards, J.F, 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir', pp. 126-7.

one of its kind, symbolised the hierarchical relationship. Also, he was doing a great favour to them by first, letting them enter his court, *Diwan-i-Am* and allowing them to have a glimpse of His August presence and second, by giving out justice to the petitioners. However, European travellers coming to Mughal court misunderstood this custom of giving and taking of gifts in the Mughal culture and called it a bribe.<sup>227</sup>

Another way of fostering distance from his subjects was the use of terror of punishments upon the infringement of royal prerogatives, or protocols of the empire. Once Jahangir, while on his hunting expedition<sup>228</sup>, was ready to take a shot at a *nilgai* was disturbed by the movement of two *kahars* (water-carrier). Consequently, he got them strunged together.<sup>229</sup> Even the nobles and the members of the royal family were not spared when they infringed the prerogatives of the Emperor. For more details see p.1

Sometimes in an attempt of getting closer to one section of the society, the Emperor alienated himself from the other. Akbar eventually alienated himself from the Islamic way of life and the Muslims. Towards the later phase of his life, it is reported that he started shunning even the fundamental practices of Islam. The person, who in the early phase of his life had undertaken fasts and performed prayers five times a day with conviction, now attempted to discourage *namaz* in the congregation, converted many of the mosques into store-houses and stables and abolished the arrangements for the maintenance of *khatib*, *muazzin* and *imam* in the mosques.<sup>230</sup> He also interfered with the Islamic way of life. He showed contemptuous attitude towards the beard which is considered an external symbol of adherence to Islam, shaved his own beard and favoured those who did the same. He prohibited cousin-marriage, encouraged the use of silken clothes and gold by men which is strictly prohibited in Islam.<sup>231</sup> Badauni tells us that Akbar enjoyed the company of 'swines and dogs' which again was against the tenets of *Quran*<sup>232</sup>.

On the other hand, Aurangzeb who chose the path of orthodoxy, secluded himself from the Hindus. But he cannot be dubbed as a fanatic. He, like his great grandfather, was a great

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<sup>227</sup>Ali, M. Athar, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Oxford University Press, revised edition 1997, Bombay Calcutta Madras, p. 211.

<sup>228</sup>When the Mughal Emperor was on his hunting expedition, which was a royal prerogative, no one else was allowed to hunt or move at the place where he was hunting, Satish Chandra, Part II, p. 179.

<sup>229</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>230</sup>Khan, Iqtidar Alam; '*Akbar's Personality Traits and World Outlook - A Critical Reappraisal*', ed. Habib, Irfan, Akbar and his India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, p. 93.

<sup>231</sup>Nizami, K. A., *Akbar and Religion*, 1989, p. 324.

<sup>232</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 109.

strategist. In his *Ahkam* (precepts) compiled by his courtier, Hamid-ud-din Khan, Aurangzeb is recorded to have said:

"What have the worldly affairs to do with religion? And why should bigotry intrude into matters of religion?"

"If the law were followed it would have been necessary to annihilate all the Rajas and their subjects."

"What concerns have we with the religion of anybody? Let Jesus follow his own religion and Moses his own."<sup>233</sup>

He even quoted *Quranic* verses to support his view that his people could follow their faith:

"*Lakum Dinkum Waliya Din.*"

"(To you, is your faith, and to me is mine.)"

-- *Surah CIX*, Verse 6<sup>234</sup>

Aurangzeb was utterly discontented with the indifferent treatment by his father, Shahjahan towards him. He was no doubt a far better military general than his elder brother, Dara Shukoh. Aurangzeb's attempt as a prince to recover Qandahar from the Persians, who captured it in 1649 from the Mughals, though in the end not a successful one, yet he and his small army of 50,000 had initially defeated the Persians outside the fort. In his second attempt also, he failed even after fighting with full conviction. The last attempt of recovering Qandahar under Shahjahan's reign was made by Dara Shukoh. The Mughals this time had a huge army. Still Dara could not win Qandahar and failed miserably.

After the failure of Aurangzeb's campaigns against Qandahar, Shahjahan transferred Aurangzeb's *jagir* to Deccan, a less productive and profitable one in 1652. While Dara's *jagir* remained close to the Mughal capital, Shahjahanabad. He was the governor of Allahabad and later appointed to Lahore. Shahjahan nominated Dara as his successor (*Wali Ahd*), gave a high-sounding title of *Buland Iqbal* in 1654, and a golden chair to sit next to the throne which was a great royal privilege for anyone showered by the Mughal Emperor. He ordered all his nobles to obey the commands of the future Mughal Emperor.

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<sup>233</sup>Pande, Shri. B. N., *Islam and Indian Culture*, Part 1, Khuda Baksh Memorial Annual Lecture, 1985, pp. 21-22.

<sup>234</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 142.

All these actions of Shahjahan disgusted Aurangzeb who suspected Dara of using his influence over Shahjahan to humiliate him.<sup>235</sup> Aurangzeb's frustration reached to its highest peak when as a Viceroy of the Deccan, he was on the verge of conquering Bijapur, but due to the intervention of Dara he had to back off. Aurangzeb accused Dara of having been bribed by the Deccani rulers. Dara was perhaps jealous of Aurangzeb's great military skill. Already Aurangzeb had proved himself in the Qandahar expeditions in the eyes of the nobles. Now had Aurangzeb won Bijapur in the Deccan, it would have been a disaster for Dara who was going to be the next Mughal sovereign. Winning Bijapur by Aurangzeb would have certainly made him more popular and successful military general than Dara. On the other side, the intervention of Dara made Aurangzeb firmly believe that Dara was misusing his proximity to Shahjahan. This embittered Aurangzeb towards Dara.

Therefore, when Dara lost the war of succession to Aurangzeb and was captured, Aurangzeb was very quick to announce his execution. But Dara was a very popular figure especially among the Hindus for his liberal attitude towards them. Aurangzeb had to justify his execution. He knew that nothing would console the Hindus who were seeing Dara as their next Mughal Emperor. He considered it wise to win the support of the Muslims by being a pious king, following the injunctions of *Quran* strictly and forbidding anything unholy. Accordingly, he gave an excuse of Dara being a heretic and in order to defend Islam, he had to be executed.<sup>236</sup>

In his life, Aurangzeb was troubled by another incident which made him to stick to orthodoxy. In 1659, during his second coronation, the chief *Qazi* was not willing to declare Aurangzeb as the successor of Shahjahan for as per the *Qazi*, Shahjahan was still alive and in the presence of him, proclaiming someone else the Mughal Emperor was unlawful. This put Aurangzeb into a very embarrassing situation. However, soon he was rescued by Qazi Abdul Wahab Gujarati who argued that it was lawful to crown Aurangzeb as no more Shahjahan could take care of affairs of the state on account of his poor health. Qazi Abdul Wahab Gujarati was rewarded by Aurangzeb by making him the chief *Qazi* for his timely intercession. But this made Aurangzeb realised one thing that even though he fought battles and won them, incarcerated and executed

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<sup>235</sup> *Akham-i-Alamgiri*, p. 6.

<sup>236</sup> Bernier in his account gives a heart-rending description about the execution of Dara Shukoh, before which he was paraded on the streets of Delhi and its effect on the commoners who were into tears to see such a dreadful plight of him. Bernier, pp. 98-9.

his kinsmen and did everything to get the throne but all these were about to prove worthless just because of the defiance of one *Qazi*. It was then he recognised the need to impress the theologians so that in future they would not become an obstacle for him. And in order to win their support, he alienated himself from the Hindus and the Hindu elements at his court.

Akbar's main motive in incorporating customs and rituals of commoners was self-glorification in which he emerged successful to a large extent. He was a great strategist who adopted popular customs and rituals so that the huge population of the Hindus would not find it difficult to accept his lordship and could easily identify themselves with the Mughal Emperor and his empire. Through the ritual of *jharokha darshan*, he achieved a status of divinity. The Hindus, who believed in the concept of reincarnation, started worshipping him, giving him the status of an avatar of *Lord Vishnu*.<sup>237</sup> The Mughal Emperor became their preserver. This was the highest form of reverence shown by the Hindu subjects towards him. They started reciting Hindi verses eulogising him. *Darshaniyas* flocked religiously outside the Emperor's palace to have a glimpse of his auspicious face. They wouldn't even partake of anything until they saw him. Abul Fazl who had attributed His Majesty, Akbar with several divine characteristics, says that people from far flung areas used to come for *jharokha* to be relieved of sickness or diseases;<sup>238</sup> probably Fazl was trying to equate Akbar's capability to cure people (as per him) with *Jesus* who too had a healing touch. Hence this ritual led to the deification of the Emperor which was one of the state ideologies under Akbar. *Jharokha* was also used for giving out justice to the petitioners. This increased the dependency of the subjects on the Emperor as it was during this time that anyone could approach the Emperor directly. Thus the functions of *jharoka darshan* served the Emperor in realizing his motives of glorifying his existence and of promoting the dependence and allegiance of more and more people.

However, for commoners, visit to the Emperor was a difficult and an expensive affair. High and influential nobles had to be approached with suitable gifts before the royal permission could be obtained<sup>239</sup>. The gifts for the nobles were not of much value but for the Emperor included rare things and cost heavily. The giving of gifts by the commoners to the nobles and the Emperor denoted their (subjects) inferior position and thus symbolised the hierarchical relationship; the Emperor was a supreme-head and he was doing a great favour to them by first letting them enter his court, *Diwan-i-Am* and allowing them to have a glimpse of His August

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<sup>237</sup> 'Brahmans told Akbar that he was an incarnation, like Ram, Krishna.' Badauni, vol. ii, p. 336.

<sup>238</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, pp. 172-73.

<sup>239</sup> Chopra, P. N., *Life and Letters under the Mughals*, Ashajanak Publications, New Delhi, 1976, p. 222.

presence and second by giving out justice to the petitioners. However, European travellers coming to Mughal court misunderstood this custom of giving and taking of gifts in the Mughal culture and called it a bribe.

Though Akbar adopted several Hindu practices so as to establish a rapport with the Hindus who were in majority. However in doing so he started deviating from the Islamic way of life. This affected the Mughal polity. The apostate attitude of Akbar was utilized by rebels and contemporary foreign rulers to their own advantage. His own son, Prince Salim, during his rebellion against Akbar in 1601, used his father's repressive policy towards Islamic practices as a means to win the support of the Muslim population. He issued a *farman* to local *hakims* (governors, etc) whose text is reproduced by Rafiuddin Ibrahim Shirazi in his '*Tazkirat ul muluk*', according to which he ordered the recipients of the farman to induce people to offer prayers in the mosques.<sup>240</sup> Before this event, when the governor of Bengal, Mirza Aziz Koka revolted, he gave an excuse that he was disgusted by the religious vagaries of Akbar, thus utilizing the growing resentment among the Muslims and justifying his act of defiance<sup>241</sup>.

Though Akbar was criticized by the Muslims of his times, yet the Muslim inhabitants of Hindustan themselves imbibed some Hindu practices. However, the difference was this; they never renounced the basic beliefs of Islam like Akbar. Abdul Qadir Badauni in his work on ethics, written in 1590-91, writes that Muslims in India had a way of life different from Muslims of other countries; they like their Hindu counterparts think very ill of anyone divorcing his wife.<sup>242</sup> Though as per the Holy Book of the Muslims, marriage, '*Nikah*' is a civil contract between a willing man and a woman for the procreation and legitimization of children and it can be dissolved through divorcing one's spouse. Whereas in Hindu law, marriage is not a social contract but a religious sacrament and it is indissoluble and irrevocable. Even widow remarriage was frowned upon as among the Hindus.

Another disadvantage of the Mughal rituals and protocols was that they had to be observed with full dedication by the Mughal Emperor. Even a slight slackness towards it could invite some sort of a political turmoil. Jahangir in his memoirs often stressed on the rigorous performance of his kingly duties even when his health did not permit it. In one instance, he

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<sup>240</sup>Khan, Iqtidar Alam; p. 93.

<sup>241</sup>Nizami, K. A., pp. 296-97.

<sup>242</sup>Ali, M. Athar, '*The Perception of India in Akbar and Abul Fazl*', ed. Habib, Irfan, Akbar and his India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, p. 217.

wrote that due to a persistent fever he became very feeble. Yet he did not inform anyone for fear of it causing false speculations among his people and went for *jharoka*, to *Diwan-i-am* and *Diwan-i-khas*. It was due to the failure of Shahjahan to attend *jharoka* for some days that the rumour of his death spread among the people. His son, Aurangzeb who was looking for such an opportunity, fully manipulated it and started the war of succession because of which Shahjahan saw the loss of his throne and the death of his sons and grandsons. Later, on his accession, this became an important cause for Aurangzeb to abandon this ritual as he found it threatening to his survival. But till the time he observed this ritual, he was always very cautious not to miss it. Bernier who was at the Mughal court during the early reign of Aurangzeb, writes that Aurangzeb once was very ill and according to the court physician needed rest but he paid no heed to his advise and continued attending *jharoka*.

It is also seen that since *jharoka darshan* was a means of knowing for his subjects that the Emperor was in good health, therefore his death was not revealed as soon as he died but concealed till the heir to the throne was apparent. Sidi Ali Reis, a Turkish Admiral, who was present at the time of Humayun's death in Delhi in his testimony writes that in order to hide this fact as his successor, Akbar at that time was in Kalanaur, a noble, Mulla Bakshi, having a striking resemblance to Humayun, was dressed like him and made to sit at the terrace where usually Humayun used to sit. People, who so far were restless to see their king, were relieved and performed salutation. Humayun's sister, Gulbadan Begum in Humayunnama informs us that before this, when her father, Babur died, the same thing was done<sup>243</sup>.

On the basis of our study, we can infer that the political and social environment in which a man lives and keeping in mind the expediency of the time, he adjusts himself accordingly. Before the advent of the Muslim invaders, the early rulers accepted the Indian culture completely. The Indo-Greeks, Shakas, Parthians and the *Kushanas* got converted either to Hinduism or Buddhism, assumed Indian names and titles like *Devaputra*, the Son of God and thus assimilated into the Indian way of life. Menander/Milinda (165-145 B.C), the most famous Indo-Greek ruler was converted to Buddhism by Nagasena. Kanishka of Kushana dynasty, himself was a Buddhist convert. He held a Buddhist council in Kashmir.<sup>244</sup> Most of these invaders were nomadic tribes and so it was much easier for them to change their lifestyles according to the circumstances. But in the medieval period, the Muslim conquerors who were

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<sup>243</sup>Moosvi, Shirin, *Episodes in the Life of Akbar: Contemporary Records and Reminiscences*, National Book Trust, Delhi, 1964, p. 39.

<sup>244</sup>Sharma, R. S, *India's Ancient Past*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, p. 194.

answerable to their *Caliph*, retained their identity, though they could not keep it intact with time and borrowed as well as influenced some Indian elements.

We saw that the Arab invaders and the Sultans of Delhi, although they did not attempt for the Indianization of the traditions and practices they adhered to, yet they welcomed the Hindus as the *zimmis* instead of killing them. Now this was a great leap taken by them because in the contemporary Muslim dominions, the only choice a non-zimmi could have was either Islam or death. Even the *kitabīs* like Christians were humiliated by asking them to wear differently or carry certain sign to declare their identity at Baghdad under the Caliphate of Umar. When the Mughals came, they with their liberal background opened a new avenue of cultural exchange. The act of the Mughal Emperor embracing the popular customs and manners of the country encouraged his Muslim subjects too to imbibe some of those.

The Mughal ceremonial and protocol had a crucial role in the Mughal politics and society. They were a means of obtaining authoritative and durable legitimacy from the subjects and so a very powerful instrument for the Mughal sovereign for the success of the empire. They became a means of constant show of Mughal power and wealth. Their observance brought glory and power to the Emperor. He was the central figure in the observance of the festivities and etiquette. However, due to scanty information on the Mughal subjects, it is difficult to say much about the participation of the commoners in the Mughal rituals. We only come across two occasions when the Mughal subjects could have the opportunity to be in the presence of their Emperor. One was during the *jharokha-darshan*, when they could see, prostrate and worship the Emperor from a distance. Another was at the *Diwan-i-khas*. Here before petitioning their cases, they had to get some rare gifts for the Emperor. Clearly, they were dormant participants.

Nonetheless, their minimal participation gave them a chance to have a glimpse of the Mughal splendour and opulence, and enough to strike a sense of awe and admiration for the empire. This was similar to what Barani observed about Balban's period (1266-87). According to him, Balban was the one ruler from Delhi Sultanate who maintained the dignity of royalty by the strict observation of etiquette and rituals. This aided in creating fear and admiration not only among his nobles but also his subjects. Both the Hindus and Muslims came from a distance of



100-200 *kos* to see his public processions.<sup>245</sup> The Mughal Emperors too had a similar motive in letting the commoners to witness the Mughal pageantry.

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<sup>245</sup>Chandra, Satish, Part I, p. 32.

***CHAPTER 2***

***COURTLY CULTURE: POWER AND RECREATION***

For the Mughal Emperor, recreation was a royal privilege and exclusively practised by him. Feasts, sports, games, food, drinks consumed and music enjoyed were at best pointers of one's social standing in the Mughal society. Hunt was a royal prerogative which aided him to establish his power and authority beyond his court. Certain sanctions put by him were to be followed not only by the umara and mansabdars but by his raiyat as well.

### Hunt

For the Mughal Emperor, leisure was a royal privilege and exclusively practised by him. Feasts, sport, games, food and drinks consumed were at best indicators of one's social ranking in the Mughal society. The hunt implied that the Emperor was not only capable of hunting ferocious wild animals but was adept in taming the untamed. He was competent enough to overcome the barbarity and savagery of undomesticated animals. Furthermore, they were utilized by the Emperor to entertain him and his men. Elephant-fights, betting on leopards and other such amusements were associated with royal extravaganza. The imperial hunt and forms of recreation communicated with multiplicity of dimensions. Each Mughal Emperor defined himself by monopolizing the forms of entertainment and they had novel designs for recreation and leisure. The concept of Mughal recreation varied from time to time as per the disposition and need of the reigning Emperor.

The Mughal Emperors, specifically Babur, Akbar and Jahangir were avid hunters of wild game. Babur and Humayun perceived hunting as just a means of fun activity. Babur, after arriving in Hindustan, in 1525, records of hunting rhinoceroses<sup>246</sup>, lions<sup>247</sup> and elephants<sup>248</sup>. Before the first battle of Panipat in 1526, Babur had encamped at Bilgram where he went for a rhinoceros hunt. Jahangir too gives instances of rhinoceros hunts in Humayun's time and that Akbar had also participated in some of those.<sup>249</sup> However, in his memoirs, there is no reference of him hunting this particular kind of animal. Babur also used tamed elephants to hunt games. Fishing was another activity which he admired. However, he caught fishes without an aid of fishing net

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<sup>246</sup>Babur gives a very fascinating account of a rhinoceros hunt, opposite Bilgram where they had encamped. It was here in this hunting expedition that Humayun and some other men of Babur saw a rhinoceros for the first time in their lives and were spellbound at the sight of it. *Baburnama*, p. 312.

<sup>247</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 440-441.

<sup>248</sup>He went for an elephant hunt in the jungles of Chunar, *ibid.*, p.44 1.

<sup>249</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 102.

and used his bare hands to catch them.<sup>250</sup> From one large horn of a rhinoceros, a drinking vessel and a set of backgammon pieces were made.<sup>251</sup>

In Akbar's time, the act of indulging of the Emperor into leisure activity was portrayed as not a way of entertainment but it was actually impregnated with many inter-connected ideas and purposes (to keep his courtiers active and disciplined, to enquire into the condition of general masses of his Empire, to keep them disciplined, etc.) to realise a superior aim of worshipping God. Hunting for Akbar, emphasises Abul Fazl, was not a pleasurable act but was a means of obtaining information:<sup>252</sup>

Superficial, worldly observers see in killing an animal a sort of pleasure, and in their ignorance stride about, as if senseless, on the field of their passions. But deep inquirers see in hunting a means of acquisition of knowledge, and the temple of their worship derives from it a peculiar lustre. This is the case with His Majesty. He always makes hunting a means of increasing his knowledge, and besides, uses hunting parties as occasions to inquire, without having first given notice of his coming, into the condition of the people and the army. He travels *incognito*, and examines into matters referring to taxation, or to *Sayúrghál* lands,<sup>253</sup> or to affairs connected with the household. He lifts up such as are oppressed, and punishes the oppressors. On account of these higher reasons His Majesty indulges in the chase, and shows himself quite enamoured of it. Short-sighted and shallow observers think that His Majesty has no other object in view but hunting; but the wise and experienced know that he pursues higher aims.

Yet in another time, Abul Fazl reveals:

His Majesty devises means of amusement, and makes his pleasures a means of testing the character of men.<sup>254</sup>

Jahangir, like his father was an ardent hunter. His *Memoirs* is full of fascinating and detailed descriptions of his hunting expeditions, his curiosities in learning animal behaviour<sup>255</sup> and to

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<sup>250</sup> *Baburnama*, pp. 440-41, 455.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>252</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, p. 292.

<sup>253</sup> *Sayúrghál* lands were rent free lands and thus granted for munificent purposes, *ibid.*, vol. i, p. 268.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 308.

<sup>255</sup> Once Jahangir ordered his men to extract the intestines of a hunted lion for he was eager to know the source of their braveness. After having a look at it, he found out that 'in a manner contrary to other animals, whose gall-

explore the authenticity of the beliefs people had regarding them. Jahangir had a 'game book'<sup>256</sup> maintained by the officers of the Hunting Department in which the number of animals he had killed from the age of twelve to fifty. This list tells us that during these years he shot 17,167 head of game of all kinds, including 86 tigers, 41 sparrows, 3276 crows, and 10 alligators. He was always curious and eager to try something new. A musk deer was presented to Jahangir while he was in Kashmir who ordered it to be cooked because never before he had the flesh of a musk deer. However, it tasted to him so bland that he writes, 'The flesh of no other wild animal is so inferior.'<sup>257</sup> Jahangir really relished the flavour of the flesh of nilgai fawns which he recorded was 'delicate and delicious, I ordered the royal cooks to prepare a *dupiyaza* (a kind of rich fricassee).'<sup>258</sup>

Shahjahan was fond of hunting too.<sup>259</sup> He was particularly interested in *durna* (crane) hunting which meant hunting cranes with a falcon (*shahin*).<sup>260</sup> He had a variety of well bred hawks. Once Jahangir who had minimal interest in this kind of hunting at the request of his son, and to please his son, Jahangir rode out early in the morning, and caught one *durna* himself.<sup>261</sup> The falcon Shahjahan had on his wrist grabbed another. Impressed by the amusement, Jahangir awarded the chief huntsman of Shahjahan, Hasan Khan, with an elephant, a horse, and a dress of honour, and his son was too presented with a horse and a dress of honour.<sup>262</sup> Falconry was enjoyed by Akbar too.<sup>263</sup>

Aurangzeb unlike his predecessors showed very little enthusiasm for hunting. He regarded hunting as nothing more than just a means of enjoyment. In one of the letters written by

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bladder is outside their livers, the gall-bladder of the lion is within his liver. Thus he concluded that this was perhaps the source of their courage. TUJ, vol. i, p. 351.

Jahangir's father, Akbar allowed the consumption of the flesh of the wild boar and tiger, believing that the chivalry of these beasts would be transmitted to those who eat them. *Muntakhabu't-lubab*, vol ii, p.315.

<sup>256</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 167.

<sup>257</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 151.

<sup>258</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>259</sup>Inayat Khan, the official court historian of Shahjahan, had referred to hunt in Shahjahan as 'the pleasant pastime.'

<sup>260</sup>Bernier talks about several kinds of hawks, used for hunting. Bernier, p. 378.

<sup>261</sup>This was the first time when Jahangir had participated in *durna* hunting. Before it he had never tried to capture a single crane with the assistance of a hawk. He enjoyed it so much that he regarded the falconry as the best of all good hunting amusements. Falconry in present time is still admired in the United Arab Emirates and in some other parts of the world.

<sup>262</sup>TUJ, vol. ii, p. 60.

<sup>263</sup>'...he came to Agra and spent his time in festivities. thence he went to his new palace, and dog-racing, and hawk-flying'. Badauni, vol. ii, p. 86.

Aurangzeb, addressed to his third son, Muhammad A'azam Shah Bahadur<sup>264</sup>, he counselled the said prince on how he should be spending his time. The letter opens with a saying of Shahjahan, 'Hunting is the business of idle persons.'<sup>265</sup> In another, he chided the same son of his. He was informed that Prince Azam had indulged himself in shooting cranes near the river Tal for a month. This agitated him for Aurangzeb felt that his son was more inclined towards such useless activities and less attentive towards the supervision of the administrative works of his province.

Though hunting is an occupation which gives pleasure and delicious food, yet it is more pleasant when indulged in after being disengaged from the execution of important affairs, to do which is your bounden duty; chiefly (after being disengaged from) performing the rights of sovereignty, which, according to religion and custom, should be done properly...You (like) the pleasure of game while I enjoy myself in conquering fortresses and subduing rebels.<sup>266</sup>

Interestingly from the content of the above mentioned letters, it appears that Aurangzeb did not see hunting as one of the constructive ways of imposing imperial authority but just a means of deriving pleasure in one's spare time. Nevertheless, Saqi Mustaid Khan records Aurangzeb's fondness for the hunting:<sup>267</sup>

How can I describe fully the hunting in which His Majesty often delighted?

Manucci too had noted Aurangzeb's likeness for hunting and even recorded an instance when while he was hunting in Kashmir, the exhausted Emperor rested under the shade of a tree, accompanied by a huntsman who was in a great imperial favour and was also formerly worked as a huntsman under Dara. Suddenly the huntsman asked the reason for ordering the decapitation of Aurangzeb who replied that it was Dara's bad luck and he went to the palace where he forbade the huntsman to ever come into his presence.<sup>268</sup>

Whatever the case be, the purpose of hunting was numerous. The animals maintained by the Emperor: the total number of them, the types, their rarity and value, their paraphernalia and such other aspects actually elevated his position before everybody else. Hunting was one of the royal prerogatives, exercised to establish royal exclusiveness and superiority and so, certain

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<sup>265</sup>Ruq., p. 15.

<sup>266</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>267</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>268</sup>Manucci, vol. ii, p. 100.

protocols were to be observed by the princes and nobles when the Emperor was on hunt. The Mughal Emperor hunted with a retinue of princes and nobles and sometimes, the royal ladies as well.<sup>269</sup> Jahangir many a number of times hunted with Nur Jahan. The area where the Mughal Emperor hunted was strongly watched over and nobody could hunt in the area selected for royal hunt. The natives, however, were permitted to catch but small game like quails, partridges, and hares as they were in great numbers. Once Jahangir was hunting nilgais and the moment he was about to shoot a nilgaw, abruptly a groom (*jilaudar*) and two bearers (*kahar*) came to the scene, and the animal got the opportunity to run away from the spot. Jahangir flew in a great rage and in anger he gave an order to his officials to grab the two offenders. The groom was killed then and there, the *kahars* were hamstrung and mounting them on asses, were paraded through the camp, as a severe warning to others ‘so that no one should again have the boldness to do such a thing’.<sup>270</sup>

They had fixed hunting-places. Rupbas<sup>271</sup> was one of them and there was an order with respect to this place that no one should hunt there. Consequently, as Jahangir records a multiple number of antelopes flooded the place but none were subjected to killing by the inhabitants. It was here at Rupbas during a span of three months and twenty days, Jahangir killed 1,414 animals.<sup>272</sup> Palam,<sup>273</sup> near Delhi, and Jahangirpur<sup>274</sup> were another fixed hunting-grounds. In Jahangirpur, Jahangir had ordered for raising a manar at the head of the grave of an antelope named Mansaraj. On a stone of that manar was carved this prose composition, written by Mulla Muhammad Husain of Kashmir, who was the chief of the elegant writers of the day: “In this enchanting place an antelope came into the world-holding (*jahan-giri*) net of the God-knowing ruler Nurd d-din Jahangir Padshah. In the space of one month, having overcome his desert fierceness, he became the head of the special antelopes.” On account of the rare quality of this antelope, Jahangir directed that no person should hunt the deer of this plain.<sup>275</sup> The robust and the favoured animals received imperial favour. The above incidence tells us that the best went to the imperial stable and could not be procured by the rest.

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<sup>269</sup> According to Bernier, the Mughal Emperor hunted ‘with an army of one hundred thousand men’. Bernier, p. 375.

<sup>270</sup> TUJ, vol. i, p. 164.

<sup>271</sup> ‘As it is a fixed hunting-place, I every day mounted to go hunting, and in these few days 158 antelopes, male and female, and other animals were killed.’ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137. After performing the pilgrimages at Dihli to the tombs of the great saints of that illustrious locality, the Emperor went on a hunting expedition in the neighbourhood of Palam.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

Without the permission of the Emperor, the nobles could not dare to hunt any game. Sometimes the Emperor would allow his nobles to go hunting. Jahangir mentions numerous cases wherein he uses the expressions like 'I would order'<sup>276</sup>, 'I told Nur Jahan to shoot...'<sup>277</sup>, 'I enjoyed myself with hawking, and ordered Mirza Rustam, Darab Khan, Mir Miran, and other servants to go and shoot as many *nilgaw* as they could'<sup>278</sup>, 'I had ordered Rustam and Suhrab Khan, his son, to go out hunting and shoot as many *nilgaw* as they could.'<sup>279</sup> On an occasion Jahangir ordered one of his nobles, Zafar Khan to go to Baba Hasan Abdal to collect game for sport. He had made a *shakband* (literally a tying together of horns or branches) in which twenty –seven red deers and 68 white ones came into the *shakband*. Jahangir first killed 29 antelopes, and then the permission was granted to the princes Parwiz and Khurram also to kill some with their arrows. Afterwards orders were given to the grandees to shoot.<sup>280</sup>

Before the Emperor went for hunting, every gamekeeper of the neighbourhood had to report to the passing army and 'apprise the Grand Master of the Hunt of the various sorts of game under his particular charge, and of the places where they are in the greatest plenty. Sentries are then stationed at the different roads of that district, to guard the tract of ground selected, which extends sometimes four or five leagues; and while the army is on its march, on one side or the other, so as to avoid that tract, the King enters it with as many *Omrahs* and other persons as have liberty to do so, and enjoys, leisurely and uninterruptedly, the sports of the field, varying them according to the nature of the game.'<sup>281</sup> In hunting with cheetahs one of Jahangir's nobles, Anup Ray was sent with a few men in advance to locate game for the Emperor. On spotting a tiger, he and some other men surrounded the tiger and sent someone to Jahangir to inform him about the discovery.<sup>282</sup>

The hunting of lion was particularly regal and nobody was permitted to hunt the species except with a special permission obtained from the Emperor.<sup>283</sup> The Mughals used *cheetahs* (leopards) for hunting.<sup>284</sup> Akbar had 1,000 cheetahs.<sup>285</sup> The Mughals used leopards for hunting. Hunting

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<sup>276</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>277</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 105.

<sup>278</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>279</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>280</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 129.

<sup>281</sup>Bernier, p. 375.

<sup>282</sup>TUJ, vol. i, 185

<sup>283</sup>Bernier, p. 378.

<sup>284</sup>Bernier describes the way the leopards were made to hunt antelopes. 'When one of these little troops is discovered, the first step is to have it seen by the leopard, who is kept chained on a small car. The sagacious and



with leopards was also an exclusive privilege reserved for the Emperor. V. Ball<sup>286</sup> tells us that Jahangir kept tamed lions.<sup>287</sup> Keeping of wild and ferocious animals such as leopards was a means of striking a sense of wonder among the people for it implied that the Emperor was fully capable of subduing even the most feared. In his presence the wild and feared too behaved obediently and therefore, nothing else could be more fearful and powerful than he himself. Abul Fazl in his deliberate attempt to glorify His Majesty stresses on unbelievable and extraordinary gift of Akbar to be able to tame the wild and feared animals effortlessly. He credits Akbar for being able to make leopards docile within just a few days time while before his rule, the rulers took months to do the same:

In former times people managed to train a newly caught leopard for the chase in the space of three months, or if they exerted themselves, in two months. From the attention which His Majesty pays to this animal, leopards are now trained in an excellent manner in the short space of eighteen days. Old and active keepers were surprised at such results, and extolled the charm of His Majesty's knowledge. From good motives, and from a desire to add splendour to his court, HM used to take it upon himself to keep and train leopards, astonishing the most experienced by his success.<sup>288</sup>

He records other several instances of such astonishing feat of Akbar:

Once a leopard had been caught, and without previous training, on a mere hint by HM, it brought in the prey like trained leopards. Those who were present had their eyes opened to truth, and experienced the blessing of prostrating themselves in belief on His Majesty.<sup>289</sup>

Attracted by the wonderful influence of the loving heart of HM, a leopard once followed the imperial suite without collar or chain, and like a sensible human being, obeyed every

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cunning animal does not run at once towards the antelopes, but hides himself, crouches, and in this cautious manner approaches them unperceived, so as to give himself a fair chance of catching them with those five or six bounds, which the leopard is noted for making the incredible agility. If successful, he gluts himself with their blood, heart, and liver! but if he miss his prey, as frequently happens, he makes no other effort, but stands perfectly still. His keeper finds no great difficulty in securing him again on the car; he approaches him quietly, caresses him, throws down a few pieces of flesh, and, covering his eyes, fastens his chain'. Bernier, p. 376.

He also explains the manners in which other animals like *nilgais* (blue bulls), cranes, and lions were hunted.

<sup>285</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 240; *Ain*, vol. i, p. 298.

<sup>286</sup>He had translated the *Travels in India* by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne.

<sup>287</sup>Tavernier, vol. I, p. 66.

<sup>288</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 297.

<sup>289</sup>*Ibid*, p. 297.

command, and at every leopard chase enjoyed it very much to have its skill brought to the test.<sup>290</sup>

A remarkable scene took place in the forest of Mathura. Shuja'at Khan, who had advanced very far, got suddenly timid. His Majesty remained standing where he was, and looked furiously at the tiger. The brute cowered down before that divine glance, and turned right about trembling all over.<sup>291</sup>

A similar kind of tone is evident in Jahangir's memoirs as well.

As in the time of my reign wild beasts have abandoned their savagery, tigers have become so tame that troops of them without chains or restraint go about amongst the people, and they neither harm men nor have any wildness or alarm.<sup>292</sup>

However, the ability of the Emperor to subdue the fiercest forces did not implicate that the weak would not be protected. The Emperor was powerful and feared to protect the meek.

He slays lions, but would not hurt an ant.<sup>293</sup>

Apart from leopards there were other animals which were kept. Badauni, a bigot noble of Akbar, was full of disgust with pigs and dogs<sup>294</sup> in the fort and harem as well and says that Akbar every morning he would go to them to catch their glimpse 'as a religious service'. Abul Fazl also mentions about Akbar's fondness for dogs who had them imported from various distant lands.<sup>295</sup> The keeping of dogs and pigs probably signified that Akbar was a just ruler and accordingly people belonging to different religions were equally welcomed; and that he respected the sensibility of other creeds too. And perhaps since dogs are considered to be a loyal animal, and the Mughal Emperor was obsessed with the concept of loyalty, therefore, he was fond of keeping them. This gets clear from the quotes of Badauni:<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>290</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 297.

<sup>291</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>292</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 240.

<sup>293</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 294.

<sup>294</sup>Pigs and dogs are considered unclean in *Quran*. However, boar is considered to be one of the incarnations of a Hindu deity, *Vishnu*. 'And the Hindus who are believers in Transmigration, persuaded him, that the boar is one of the ten forms.' Badauni, vol. ii, p. 314.

Roe informs that Jahangir would ask him about English dogs while Prince Khurram wanted the ambassador to supply him one. Roe gifted some English dogs to Jahangir. Interestingly, Roe informs about the use of dogs by the Mughal Emperor for inflicting punishment on an offender. Once a hundred thieves were brought before Jahangir, he ordered the leader of the thieves to be torn into pieces by dogs and the rest to be killed. Roe's Embassy, p. 201.

<sup>295</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 301.

<sup>296</sup>Badauni, vol ii, pp. 314-15.

And he quoted the saying of some of the sages, that a dog has ten virtues and that if a man were possessed of but one of them he would be a saint, in support of this. And some of the courtiers who were most entertaining in all sorts of music and in the realm of poetry became a very proverb,<sup>297</sup> used to take dogs to their table and eat with them. And some heretic poets, of Irāq and Hind, so far from objecting to this, followed their example, and even made a boast of it and vied them, taking the dog's tongues into their mouths :-

“Say to the Mir, under thy skin thou hast a dog, as well as a carcass.

A dog runs about in front of his door, make him not thy messmate.”

Jahangir added a philanthropist touch to the hunt. There were times when the flesh of the hunted animals was distributed among the poor of the neighbourhood. Once on killing a *nilgai*, he ordered his officers to cook and gave it to poor people of the area. He also gave money to them.<sup>298</sup>

Mughal Persian accounts, recorded especially during the time of Akbar and Jahangir, boast the ruling Emperor's hunting skills and innovations brought by them in the methods and techniques of hunting. Hunting also prepared them for war and exhibited their stately virtues of courage and bravery. Akbar was a great sportsman. He had a written record of the game he shot, along with the descriptions of the guns<sup>299</sup> he used to shoot. Jahangir in his memoirs had praised Akbar's shooting skill enormously:<sup>300</sup>

He had no rival in shooting with a gun, and with the one with which he killed Jitmal, and which was called Sangram, he killed some 3,000 or 4,000 birds and beasts. I may be reckoned a true pupil of his. Of all sports I am most disposed to that with the gun, and in one day have shot eighteen deer.

Nur Jahan was a good shot too.<sup>301</sup> Once on a hunting expedition with Jahangir, she killed two tigers with one shot each and two more with four shots. Jahangir describes this remarkable accomplishment of his beloved in the following words:<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>297</sup>Perhaps Badauni's indication here is towards Tansen, the famed musician.

<sup>298</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 255.

<sup>299</sup>Abul Fazl records a number of inventions and innovations brought by Akbar with regard to imperial guns. For a detailed description, see *Ain*, vol. i, p. 119.

<sup>300</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 45.

<sup>301</sup>Alexander Rogers, the translator of *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* or *Memoirs of Jahangir*, quotes an interesting couplet written by a poet, named Sayyid Ahmad, probably to highlight Nur Jahan marvellous hunting skill—

“Though Nur-Jahan be in form a woman,  
In the ranks of men she's a tiger-slayer.”

Until now such shooting was never seen, that from the top of an elephant and inside of a howdah (*'amari*) six shots should be made not one miss, so that the four beasts found no opportunity to spring or move. As a reward for this good shooting I gave her a pair of bracelets (*pahunchi*) of diamonds worth 100,000 ruppes and scattered 1,000 *ashrafis* (over her).

Jahangir yet on another occasion praised Nur Jahan's hunting expertise. This time since Jahangir took a vow of not taking a single life with his own hand, he commanded Nur Jahan to shoot a tiger who instantly killed it with one shot. Jahangir was thoroughly impressed by the skilfulness of Nur Jahan as he wrote that killing a tiger while mounted on an elephant is indeed a very tricky task to perform for the animal 'is not at ease when it smells a tiger, and is continually in movement, and to hit with a gun from a litter (*'imari*) is a very difficult matter...'<sup>303</sup> The proficiency of Nur Jahan gains more credence when Jahangir records that one of his officers, Mirza Rustam, who was unmatched in shooting, only after him, had many times missed three or four shots from an elephant.

Jahangir was also an expert in shooting. One day Jahangir was hunting wolves in Aligarh in the forest, *Nuh*. He proudly claimed to have shot a wolf with just a bullet while many skilled men even after having shooting twenty or thirty arrows at the animal could not kill it.<sup>304</sup> The skilfulness in hunting techniques was exhibited before the subjugated rulers and zamindars to impress them. Jahangir hunted around forty red antelopes and a female panther was too captured in the hunt. The zamindars of that place were extremely impressed by the catch because since the time of their fathers not a single panther was heard to be spotted in that region.<sup>305</sup>

Jahangir effectively through his hunting skill impressed the heir-apparent of Mewar and the son of Rana Amar Singh:

As the hour of the leave-taking of Kunwar Karan was at hand, I was desirous of showing him my skill in shooting with a gun. Just at this time the *qarawulan* (*shikaris*) brought in news of a tigress. Though it is an established custom of mine only to hunt male tigers,

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<sup>302</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 375.

<sup>303</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 105.

<sup>304</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>305</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 125.

yet, in consideration that no other tiger might be obtained before his departure, I went for the tigress. I took with me Karan, and said to him that I would hit it wherever he wished me to do so. After this arrangement I went to the place where they had marked down the tiger. By chance there was a wind and disturbance in the air, and the female elephant on which I was mounted was terrified of the tigress and would not stand still. Notwithstandingly, I shot her in the eye. On the same day Karan petitioned me for a special gun, and I gave him a special Turkish one.<sup>306</sup>

Hunt was not only the expression of the Emperor's dexterity and agility but it kept his men vigorous too and was a way of obtaining many royal favours. The nobles were rewarded for their acts of bravery while hunting. Since Anup Ray had fought bravely with a ferocious tiger, Jahangir bestowed on him the title of Anirai Singh-dalan (a tiger-slayer).<sup>307</sup> One day when Shajahan was out hunting on his elephant with one of his sons, who sat with him fanning him, the elephant suddenly went uncontrollable and the driver in order to calm the elephant, offered himself to it. The beast immediately crushed him under its feet, and thereafter, was once again turned mild as before. In recognition of the driver's sacrifice, Shahjahan promoted each of the sons of the deceased man and distributed 200,000 rupees to the poor.<sup>308</sup>

There were several other moments when the Emperor and the princes and nobles were placed into a life-threatening moments owing to perilous nature of the hunt. While chasing a hyena on horseback, Akbar's horse tripped and he fell off it; his face was dashed against the stones.<sup>309</sup> Once when he was about to ride a female elephant, the beast was assaulted by a *mast* (rutting) elephant, *Malul Rai*. On the night of 28<sup>th</sup> July, 1596, while watching a deer-fight, Akbar was thumped by a deer's horns. As a result of this, one of his testicles was mangled.<sup>310</sup> In effect, Akbar was thrown to the ground.<sup>311</sup> In one of the elephant-combats, an elephant named *Cacar*, who was notorious for killing men, ran towards Birbal and attacked him. Just in the nick of time, he was rescued by Akbar, who came galloping on his horse.<sup>312</sup> A raging elephant killed Jahangir's huntsman Mirza Beg.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>306</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 286-7

<sup>307</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>308</sup>Tavernier, vol. i, pp. 220-221.

<sup>309</sup>A.K., vol. iii, p. 866.

<sup>310</sup>A.K., vol.iii, p. 1061; *Ain*, vol. i, p. 613.

<sup>311</sup>A.K., vol. iii, p. 869.

<sup>312</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 654.

<sup>313</sup>TUJ, vol. ii, p. 246.

The animals captured through hunt were included in the imperial stables which were given out to the princes and nobles on many important occasions such as on undertaking a campaign, on being promoted to a higher rank, and other such events. Further, the animals were utilized in war too. Ovington says that the animals in the Mughal Empire were assigned a range of different purposes: some were trained as warring animals, while others were used as a means of transportation for royal ladies and his attendants; they were also utilized as beasts of burden to carry carriages and supplies while marching.<sup>314</sup> He observes that Aurangzeb had a huge collection of animals. However, the number of them kept was not as remarkable as was claimed by many who had written on the Mughals. He had personally enquired into the matter<sup>315</sup> and found out that there were as many as four or five hundred elephants along with camels, mules, and other creatures.<sup>316</sup> Abul Fazl in *Ain* does not give any reference to the number of elephants maintained in the imperial stable, nevertheless it provides wonderful particulars with respect to the seven kinds of imperial elephants (*mast, shergir, sada, manjhola, karha, phandurkiya, and mokal*), food, harness, capacities, and characteristics of the elephants in the establishment kept by Akbar, and states that he had 101 for his own use.<sup>317</sup> The variations in the record of the number of imperial animals maintained by the Mughal Emperor was probably due to the fact that the count was logically variable from time to time; the exact number of animals could not be kept for a very long duration. It was susceptible to change owing to their utilization in war campaigns, and animal combats. Besides, the continuous exchange of gifts too was a factor responsible for the alteration in their number.

Let us now examine the way the animals were procured through hunt and thereafter how the captured animals were a significant part of Mughal rituals and ceremonials like the exchange of gifts, muster of animals, etc. Akbar obtained *Alam-Gajraj* while hunting. It later became the chief of Jahangir's *khasa* elephants and was the largest of them all.<sup>318</sup> Jahangir captured *Ravan*

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<sup>314</sup>Ovington, p. 117.

<sup>315</sup>...the majority of those who have written accounts of India say boldly that the Mogul keeps 3,000 or 4,000 elephants. When at Jahanabad where the Emperor at present resides, I often inquired from the person who has charge of them, the number of elephants in his charge for the Emperor's service and he assured me that he had only 500, called elephants of the household, because they are employed only to carry the women and the tents with all the rest of the baggage, and for war only 80 or at most 90.' *Ibid.*

<sup>316</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup>See details in *Ain*, vol. i, pp. 131-39.

<sup>318</sup>TUJ, vol. ii, p.18. Jahangir records that an elephant by the name of *Durjan Sal* was the largest in Akbar's elephant stables.

*Sar* and *Pavan Sar*<sup>319</sup> in one of his *qamargah* hunts. After *Pavan* was tamed, Jahangir commanded it to be stationed near the *jharoka*, 'that he might be constantly under my eye.'<sup>320</sup>

However, it was not only through hunt but war also provided an opportunity to acquire animals. Many of the imperial animals especially elephants were captured in war. During the siege of Surat in January 1573, in the battle between Khan Aazam Aziz Kokaltash and Muhammad Husain, Khan Aazam and his men emerged victorious. The rival party's mast elephant was caught and was dispatched to Akbar as *peshkash*.<sup>321</sup> An abundant booty, consisting of women, elephants, horses, money and other goods were presented to Akbar. Among them the elephants *Aprup*, *Gajgajhan*, and *Saman* were received with special attention.<sup>322</sup> The Shah of Persia had sent a horse to Jahangir which was procured out of the spoils of the Turkish camp. Jahangir later bestowed the horse, *Rum-ratan* (the Jewel of Turkey) to Prine Khurram.<sup>323</sup> Ninety elephants of those which Qasim Khan had acquired from the conquest of the country of Kuch (Behar), and the conquest of the Maghs and the zamindars of Orissa, were brought before me and placed in the special elephant houses.<sup>324</sup>

There were different methods of procuring of animals through hunt. Babur mentions of the procedure he used for the hunt was *battue* which involved the beating of woods and bushes to flush game.<sup>325</sup> Besides, rhinoceroses were killed during the Hindustan campaigns in the forests of Peshawar and Hashnagar. Babur informs that a rhino is more rapacious than an elephant and cannot be tamed.<sup>326</sup> During hunts they gored a lot of men and horses. During one hunt a page named Maqsud had his horse thrown a spear length by one. Thereafter he was nicknamed Maqsud.<sup>327</sup>

The most frequently used method of hunting was *qamargah* (ring-hunt). This style of hunting was exclusively practised by the Emperor. As per this mode of hunting, the animals were chased from every corner to a central spot by the sounds of drum-beating and shouting and when the place was surrounded from all sides, the Emperor would come into it and shoot the

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<sup>319</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5; They were named so because Jahangir caught them from a jungle named *Rakas (Rakshas) Pahar* or demon hill.

<sup>320</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>321</sup>A.K, vol. iii, pp .35-6.

<sup>322</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 350.

<sup>323</sup>TUJ, vol. ii, p. 209.

<sup>324</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 300.

<sup>325</sup>*Baburnama*, p. 312.

<sup>326</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>327</sup>*Ibid.*, p.337.

animals. The Persian court accounts often record the Emperor hunting in this style. There were other modes used too suitable for each kind of animals. Abul Fazl laboriously writes a very interesting description of the ways the tiger, elephants, leopards, antelopes, and birds were caught. Animals were trained to capture other animals such as leopards were used to catch deer; trained deer caught wild deer; there were hunting lynx, dogs and hawks. He also talks of how the frogs were taught to catch sparrows.<sup>328</sup> Many European travellers also record the manner of Mughal hunting. Bernier writes on the method used for hunting of lion, and the use of lynx in the chase.<sup>329</sup> Ovington elaborately gives the information on the way the elephants were captured:<sup>330</sup>

The wild Elephants, which the Mogul and other Princes keep tame, are taken different ways. Sometimes by digging Pits in the Ground, and covering them with false Earth, in the Paths frequented by the Elephants, which walking upon it deceives their Weight, and suddenly they drop down. But if the unwieldy Animal chances to evade this Covert Contrivance, he grows very vigilant ever after, and warily with his his Trunk examines all suspected Ground he is likely to tread upon. Sometimes they decoy the Male with a Female Elephant bred up for that purpose, which leads him into a narrow Passage, hedged in so strongly on both sides with Trunks of Trees, and many pieces of Timber, that he can neither turn about his monstrous Body to step backwards, nor remove with all his mighty Strength the Obstacles that inclose and barricade him, till he is taken and led home between two others that are tame, and his Wildness presently wears off, and in less than a Fortnight's time he quietly submits to Discipline, bethinks himself, and grows familiar.

A similar kind of description regarding the manner in which the elephants were hunted is found in Tavernier's account too.<sup>331</sup>

Akbar brought many innovations in the mode of hunting animals<sup>332</sup> and he disapproved of cruel ways of hunting. For example, in *Ghantahera* mode of hunting, the hunter covering himself with a shield, or a basket, rang bells. Other hunters would stay ambush. As soon as the animals, attracted by the sound of the bells, approached towards it, the men hidden in bushes or elsewhere shot them. At times, the hunter would allure the animals with a song. Akbar strictly

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<sup>328</sup>For a detailed description, see *Ain*, vol. i, pp. 292-308.

<sup>329</sup>The Persian term for it is *sihágosh*, or 'black ear', Bernier 378.

<sup>330</sup>Ovington, pp. 117-8.

<sup>331</sup>Tavernier, vol. i, p. 157.

<sup>332</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 302.



disliked killing animals in this way<sup>333</sup> perhaps because this mode involved first gaining the confidence of the animal and later killing the completely astonished beast.

### **Rise of Court Splendour via Hunt**

The scope of hunt for the Emperor (i.e, protocols followed on hunt by the princes, nobles, and the local people of the neighbourhood, and exclusivity practised in the manner of hunting) was not limited to the hunting-ground, or to the place where it was performed but it was extended to the Mughal court as well. The animals procured enriched the imperial collection of animals. They formed an integral aspect in the Mughal ceremony of gifts-exchange, in the daily mustering of animals where they were paraded with their full majestic paraphernalia, and in forms of entertainment (animal-combats). But Fazl writes that hunt aided in increasing splendour of the court: <sup>334</sup>

His Majesty, from motives of generosity and from a wish to add splendour to his Court, is fond of hunting with falcons, though superficial observers think that merely hunting is his object.

The hunting and trained animals of the imperial animal houses with their decorative equipments were paraded before foreign dignitaries to display the magnificence of the Empire. When Mirza Sulaiman, ruler of Badakhshan, had come to the Mughal Empire, Akbar gave him a grand reception. As soon as he reached the outskirts of the Mughal capital, he was received by many of the Mughal nobles, and when he was three miles away, Akbar himself rode forward to welcome him. The entire metropolis was lighted up. His use of imperial animals was especially striking. Rows of elephants decorated with remarkable paraphernalia in gold and silver were formed from the palace to his quarters and between every two elephants was placed a hunting leopard festooned with precious items and golden coverings. Cows with golden headstalls too created a great spectacle for all the assembled people there. <sup>335</sup>

Since animals were an indispensable component of battles fought in medieval times, therefore, they formed a significant part of the Mughal Empire. To quote Abul Fazl:

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<sup>333</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 302-3.

<sup>334</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>335</sup>M.U, vol. ii, p. 891.

The Imperial elephant stables added materially to the pomp of a king and to the success of a conqueror; and was of the greatest use for the army.<sup>336</sup>

Gifts were exchanged on various festivities and ceremonials at the Mughal court. The Persian accounts are full of innumerable examples of offering of animals as gifts to the Emperor. The king of foreign lands were very selective while sending choice gifts to the Mughal Padshah and would send rare, luxurious and celebrated items of their territory and vice versa. Since the Mughals had a liking for hunting, therefore, they were sent hunting and exquisite animals, hunting items, and expensive paraphernalia for animals. Even experienced huntsman as an ambassador to the Mughal Empire was recorded to be sent. The Shah of Persia, through Zambil Beg, presented four horses with trappings, three *tuyghun* (white) falcons, five mules and five camels, etc.<sup>337</sup> Pari Beg Mir Shikar, the cheif huntsman of the Shah of Persia, came to the Mughal court with two falcons (*shunqar*).<sup>338</sup> On the eve of Jahangir's fourteenth *Nauroz* celebration, his gifts of the ruler of Golconda, Qutub-ul-Mulk, included two colossal elephants and five elephant-trappings. Jahangir named one of them *Nur-i- Nauroz* (the Light of New Year's Day) since the beast entered the private elephant-house on New Year 's Day. He mounted him and rode him into the courtyard of the palace and also fixed his value at Rs. 80,000, and the value of six others was fixed at Rs. 20,000. Jahangir was very pleased to see the elephant for it 'looked well to my eye'<sup>339</sup>. The second elephant, with silver housings, was also presented with Rs. 10,000 more in various choice jewels. The same day Shah Jahan, along with other gifts, presented the Emperor a *howdah* made of gold, amounting to Rs. 30,000.

The nobles too while offering gifts would keep in mind to give a rare kind of animals which one could fail to imagine or had never had a glimpse of it before. Khan Zaman and his brother Bahadur Khan, after their submission, presented *peshkash* which included noted elephants like *Dilsankar*, *Pulta*, *Dalil*, *Sab-dilia* and *Jag-Mohan* (world-fascination).<sup>340</sup> The Emperor's fondness for a peculiar kind of beast or bird was too kept into consideration. 'Abdu'llah Khan, one of the nobles of Akbar had sent him antelopes as Akbar was fond of watching them fight.<sup>341</sup> Lachmi Chand, Raja of Kumaon, offered hawks and falcons and other hunting animals.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, pp. 123-4.

<sup>337</sup> TUJ, vol. ii, p. 186.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>340</sup> A.K, vol. ii, p. 229.

<sup>341</sup> Peter Mundy, vol. ii, p. 126.

<sup>342</sup> TUJ, vol. ii, p. 19.

The nobles would try to procure animals even from a far-off land to impress the Emperor. Muqarrab Khan offered Jahangir a small elephant from Abyssinia which was brought via ship<sup>343</sup>; Itimad Khan of Gujarat had sent an African elephant. Jahangir reported it to be of a very grouchy temperament.<sup>344</sup> Qasim Khwaja of Dihbid had sent from *Ma-wara 'a-n-nahr* (Transoxiana) five *tuyghun* (white) falcons to Jahangir.<sup>345</sup>

They would even readily surrender their renowned beasts. One of the Rajput Rajas, Raja Suraj Singh presented a great elephant called *Ran-rawat*.<sup>346</sup> It was his celebrated elephant. Jahangir introduced it into his imperial stable.<sup>347</sup> In another time, the noble presented the Emperor with another elephant, named *Fauj-sangar* ('ornament of the army') as *peshkash* again and just as the former one, this elephant was too brought into his private stud. Jahangir in return for the elephant *Fauj-sangar*, gave Raja Suraj Singh an elephant which was worth 10,000 rupees out of his private elephant stable.<sup>348</sup> Ovington informs us that once Aurangzeb was gifted a horse by an English merchant, and instantly it became his favourite because as per Aurangzeb, the horse resembled a lot to the horse the Prophet Mohammad wanted to ride. He gave an order to feed him near his own apartment and to bring it to him every day.<sup>349</sup>

The Emperor too showered gifts on his nobles to make them to perceive their association with the court as lucrative and beneficial to them. Jahangir gifted his favourite horse as a means of favour to Raja Man Singh. This was the same horse which was sent by Shah Abbas along with some more other horses and appropriate gifts by his ambassador Minuchihr to Akbar. Man Singh was extremely delighted on receiving the horse. Jahangir observes, 'being presented with this horse the Raja was so delighted that if I had given him a kingdom I do not think he would have shown such joy. At the time they brought the horse it was three or four years old. The whole of the servants of the Court, Moghul and Rajput together, represented that no horse like this had ever come from Iraq to Hindustan. When Akbar gave the province of Khandesh and the Subah of the Deccan to my brother Daniyal, and was returning to Agra, he by way of

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<sup>343</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 323.

<sup>344</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 323.

<sup>345</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 10.

<sup>346</sup>Jahangir calls *Ran-rawat* 'the wonders of the age' and 'is worth 20,000 rupees'.

<sup>347</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 287.

<sup>348</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 289-90.

<sup>349</sup>Ovington, pp. 119-120.

kindness told Daniyal to ask of him whatever he desired. Seizing the opportunity, he asked for this horse, and he gave it to him.<sup>350</sup>

Similarly, to the *Khan-i-khanan*, Jahangir gave a bay horse, again it was sent by Shah Abbas and Jahangir had made it the head of the stable of his private horses. Jahangir writes, 'He was so rejoiced over it that it would be difficult to describe. In truth a horse of this great size and beauty was hardly come to Hindustan. I also gave him the elephant, *Futuh*, that is unrivalled in fighting, with twenty other elephants.'<sup>351</sup> Jahangir gave a special elephant called *Gaj Ratan*, to his son (*farzand*) Khan Jahan, along with 1,000 horses from the royal stables.<sup>352</sup> An elephant from my private stud, by name '*Alam-guman*, was entrusted to Habibu-llah for Raja Man Singh and sent. A special horse was sent to Bengal for Kesho Das Maru, and a female elephant was now given to Arab Khan, the jagirdar of Jalalabad. At this time Iftikhar Khan had sent an offering of a rare elephant from Bengal. As I approved of it, it was entered among my private elephants.<sup>353</sup> Raja Rup Chand, having been honoured with the gift of an elephant and a horse, took leave to go to his jagir. Khan Jahan Lodi was made governor of Multan, and was given leave. There were conferred on him a complete dress together with a *nadiri*, a jewelled dagger, a special elephant with trappings, a female elephant, a special horse of the name of *Khadang* (i.e., Arrow), and a pair of hawks.<sup>354</sup>

A new entrant at the court was especially a recipient of numerous gifts frequently. Jahangir was particularly concerned of gaining the support of a new attendant. This is why when Prince Karan of Mewar came to his court immediately after the conquest of Mewar, Jahangir in his memoirs talks of his overwhelming him often with valuable gifts. At this meeting twenty horses, a *qaba* (*parm narm*) of *Cashmere* cloth, twelve deer, and ten Arabian dogs were given to Karan. The next day, forty horses, the next day forty-one horse, and the third day twenty, amounting in the space of three days to 101 head, were given as a present to Kunwar Karan.<sup>355</sup>

On the eve of festivals celebrated at the court, gifts were exchanged. During one of the celebrations of the feast of solar weighing which took place in the house of Maryam-zamani, Mutaqid Khan presented Jahangir with twenty-five elephants.<sup>356</sup> Asaf Khan on the feast of solar

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<sup>350</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 142.

<sup>351</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>352</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 209.

<sup>353</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 170.

<sup>354</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 191.

<sup>355</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 289.

<sup>356</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 230.

birthday of Jahangir which was celebrated in the house of his mother, Maryam-zamani, presented 90 elephants.<sup>357</sup> On the fifth New Year's Day from the accession of Jahangir, Miran Sadr Jahan presented twenty-eight hawks and falcons and other gifts; Kishwar Khan, twenty-two male and female elephants.<sup>358</sup> Raja Bir Singh Deo, on the eve of the third New Year from Jahangir's accession, reported himself to Agra Fort and had brought a white *cheetah* to show him.<sup>359</sup> At Ujjain when Shahjahan gave a feast of his son, Aurangzeb, he presented a tray of jewels, jewelled ornaments, and fifty elephants (thirty males and twenty females) to Jahangir.<sup>360</sup> On the eve of one of Aurangzeb's sons, Prince Azam, Jahanara Begum was honoured with an elephant named *Sawarganj* which was worth 15,000 rupees and Jahanzeb Banu Begam received two elephants.<sup>361</sup>

A prince or a noble before being sent on a war was honoured with gifts of elephants, war-weapons made from the hides of hunted animals. Jahangir before sending Khurram to Deccan presented him an elephant with other kinds of gifts. Nur Jahan Begum also gifted an elephant to him.<sup>362</sup> Not only animals but their products were also presented. Their hides were useful in making war-weapons. Manucci says that the shields made of buffalo hide was very strong and could sufficiently resist an arrow. Because of this, the shields of their hide too formed a part of gifts to the princes and nobles.<sup>363</sup>

The animals offered as a means of *peshkash* to the Emperor was not necessarily every time acceptable to the Emperor. If he did not like a particular gift, he would deny on the spot to take it and return it. On his arrival at the court from the fort of Rohtas,<sup>364</sup> Man Singh offered 100 elephants, male and female, to Jahangir. However, Jahangir did not accept the offerings for according to him none was suitable to be admitted among his private elephants. Not being approved of the presents offered to the Emperor was an offence but since Man Singh was one of the favourites of Akbar, therefore, Jahangir, out of consideration, writes, 'I did not parade his offences before his face...'<sup>365</sup> Sayyid Nizam s. Mir Miran Sadr Jahan, who was the faujdar of Kanauj, presented two elephants, and some hawks. I accepted one elephant and a pair of hawks.

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<sup>357</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>358</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>359</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>360</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 50.

<sup>361</sup>M.A, p. 49.

<sup>362</sup>TUJ, vol. ii, p. 190.

<sup>363</sup>Manucci also records about the massive sturdiness of rhinoceros hide which as per him could even withstand a musket-ball. Manucci, vol. ii, p. 336.

<sup>364</sup>The fort was in the Mughal province of Patna and Behar, TUJ, vol. i, p. 138.

<sup>365</sup>*Ibid.*

Ratan, son of Bhoj-hara, had brought three elephants as an offering to Jahangir, out of which one was accepted and taken among the Imperial elephants. Jahangir named the approved animal *Ratangaj*. And as a reward, Jahangir gave Ratan the title of *Sarbuland Ray*.<sup>366</sup>

Gifts of animals or as parts of salaries to the nobles were given during the ritual of the mustering of animals as well.<sup>367</sup> The muster of animals from Akbar's reign had acquired a ritualistic activity. The first animal to be mustered was the elephants and they had to be from the imperial stable. The *Khasa* (the best category) elephants with their paraphernalia were the foremost ones to be brought before Akbar every day, followed by the *halqa* elephants. On Tuesdays the number of them mustered was around ten to twenty. On Sundays one *halqa* elephant was brought before Akbar to be given away as a present to the princes and nobles of the court. Earlier the rank of the *Khasa* elephants was depended on the number of times they had been inspected by Akbar. Later it was fixed by the number of times Akbar had mounted them. The rank of the *halqas* was decided by the number of times it had been mustered.<sup>368</sup>

Regarding the muster of *khasa* elephants, Tavernier notices that seven most robust elephants were first brought for muster before the Emperor. Out of the seven, one was always kept ready with howdah on its back in case the Emperor desired to mount. The rest were decorated with valuable items like brocade, chains of gold and silver about their necks. The four of them were loaded with the royal standard. One after the other was inspected by the Emperor and each opposite the throne 'saluted His Majesty by placing its trunk on the ground and then elevating it above its head three times. On each occasion it trumpets aloud...'<sup>369</sup>

The elephants maintained by the nobles were also almost daily brought before Akbar, who settled their rank, and ordered them to be branded with a peculiar mark (*dagh*). Elephants of dealers also were brought before Akbar and their rank was too fixed.<sup>370</sup> The nobles were expected to keep the animals in a good condition. If there was any slackness shown in their maintenance, they were fined. On the other hand, if the animal was found to be healthy, the keeper was rewarded for it. Hamiduddin Khan, a noble in Aurangzeb's time paraded the

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<sup>366</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>367</sup>...a custom which has lasted at this court since Timur-i-lang, who began it, four horses, ready saddled for any emergency, are kept near the door of the *Ghusl-khanah*, the place where audience is given and justice dispensed. When the king wishes to gratify any of his children, he makes him a present of one of his favourite horses, along with twenty or fifty others of the ordinary sort', Manucci, vol. ii, p. 337.

<sup>368</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 224.

<sup>369</sup>Tavernier, vol. i, p. 307.

<sup>370</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 224.

elephants in a stout-condition, as a result of which he received an increment of thirty troopers.<sup>371</sup>

Thereafter horses were brought to be mustered, but before that the horses were examined by officers, who fixed their value and divided them into three classes. The horses which belonged to the third class, formed separate stables, and were given away as presents. On Sundays horses were the first that were mustered. Double the usual number was then inspected.<sup>372</sup> Camels and cattle were too paraded daily.

On the day of the Diwali, several cows were ornamented and paraded before Akbar. Abul Fazl says, 'People are very fond of this custom.'<sup>373</sup> Later some alterations were seen in the mustering of animals and instead of the daily mustering of all of them, certain days were allotted to each category of animals and thus brought before the Emperor. Accordingly on Sundays horses were mustered; on Mondays, three different kinds of animals – camels, cows, and mules were brought one after another. The soldiers were mustered on Tuesdays. Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays there was no mustering of animals. Finally on Saturdays the elephants were mustered.

### **Hierarchy of Animals**

In the Mughal society, hierarchy was a very well-seeped feature. Not only the princes and nobles were allotted grand titles, ranks and gifts as per the service provided to the Emperor but a similar kind of treatment was given to animals as well. The favourites of the Emperor were a beneficiary of countless special treatment from the kind of food provided to them to their paraphernalia and means of transportation. Fazl writes:<sup>374</sup>

For the sake of show, the leopards get brocaded saddle cloths, chains studded with jewels and coarse blankets, and *Gushkani* carpets to sit on. Grandees of the court also were appointed to superintend the keepers of each leopard; they were to take care that the animals were nicely dressed, and that new ones were added to the establishment...For their conveyance carts were made and were drawn by horses, and cattle; or they were made to sit on horses, and sometimes they were carried by men in *doolies*. The best leopard which Akbar had by the name of *Samand-manik*; he was carried on a *chau-dol*,

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<sup>371</sup>M.A., p. 202.

<sup>372</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 225.

<sup>373</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>374</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 298-9.

and proceeded with much pomp. His servants, fully equipped, run at his side; the *naqqara* (a large drum) is beaten in front, and sometimes he is carried by two men in horseback, the two ends of the pole of the *chau-dol* resting on the necks of their horses. Formerly two horses were kept for every leopard; but now three horses were given to two leopards. Others have a *dooly*, or a cart drawn by four oxen. Many travel along on one and the same *dooly*. A tame, trained leopard had the *dooly* carried by three men, others by two.

We see that nobles, on the successful completion of the assigned tasks to them, were rewarded with promotions or/and showered with gifts. Likewise, the imperial animals were too given some presents on exhibiting skill. The men employed to train and keep the imperial leopards received presents on all occasions when the animals' performance had pleased the Emperor, *as an encouragement to further exertions*.<sup>375</sup> Abul Fazl says that for each animal when performed well, a special present had been fixed. However, he restrains himself from disclosing the kind of gifts they received.<sup>376</sup> Once when a hunting *cheetah*, named *Chitranjan* caught a deer by a marvellous act of leaping across a ravine which was not less than twenty-five yards broad, the pleased Akbar increased the rank of that leopard; he was made the leader of all imperial leopards. Furthermore, as a special honour a drum was beaten in front of the leopard.<sup>377</sup>

Abul Fazl constantly compares the treatment the animals used to get in earlier days or in the days of HM in different territories. He says that the hawks were generally fed once a day in Kashmir but at the Mughal Court they were fed twice.<sup>378</sup> Yet in another time, he writes that in olden days, people were scared of ferocious animals and so they were blindfolded and never permitted to wander freely. But Akbar never had them blindfolded and even allowed them to move freely in the evenings and still they would behave obediently and not harm a single soul.<sup>379</sup>

The favour shown to the imperial animals were noticed by the Europeans as well. Manucci gives a list of 67 *khasa* or chief elephants on which the king mounted and the way they were kept. In Aurangzeb time, *Aurang-gaj* was the throne-elephant, the Captain of all the Elephants. This elephant entered the court fully decorated and accompanied by a few other elephants and flags, cymbals, flutes, and trumpets. The daily expenditure on his food was 25 rupees and he

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<sup>375</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>376</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup>A.K., vol. ii, p. 539.

<sup>378</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 305.

<sup>379</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 300.



was attended by 10 servants. He gives a very interesting account of the manner in which he was kept. About them, he opines, 'nothing is wanted to these animals, either in the way of food or sumptuous equipment.'<sup>380</sup> Ovington talks about the allowance of special food to the Emperor's animals and a huge amount invested on their stated extraordinary treatment.<sup>381</sup> Tavernier writes that Aurangzeb's stables were 'always full of very fine horses, the least valuable of which has cost 3,000 *écus*, and some are worth up to 10,000 *écus*.' There were bamboo screens in their stables to prevent the flies and two men were employed for every one horse. Out of the two, one was chiefly occupied in fanning it. The gallery was covered with stunning carpets, which in the evening were removed for preparing spread the bedding of the horses which was made of the dried and crushed waste products of the animal. Tavernier, however, adds that horses imported from Persia, Arabia, or the country of the Usbeks, were given special treatment. On the other hand, the rest of the stables were not in a good condition.<sup>382</sup>

### Hunt as Omen

The ability to control the ferocious animals or having them performed as per the wish of the Emperor was taken as an auspicious omen from God, again symbolically implying the divine favour upon the Emperor. Jouhar records that Humayun who always kept a cock so as to wake up the courtiers at the crack of the dawn, once said to himself, "if it is the will of fortune to favour me, the cock will mount upon my shoulder, and began to crow; on which his Maesty was much pleased, took the cock in his hands, and put a silver ring on its neck."<sup>383</sup> On his march against the rebellious Ibrahim Husain M., Akbar spotted a deer and it occurred to him that if he caught this deer it would be an indication of victory. So a hunting leopard was let loose and it straight away caught the deer. Later Ibrahim Husain was chastised too.<sup>384</sup> Once on spotting a herd of more than seventy elephants, Akbar took it as a positive omen as he was at that time involved in a campaign against Abdullah Khan of Malwa in 1564. Akbar was successful in capturing those elephants and so did in defeating Abdullah Khan.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>380</sup>Manucci, vol. ii, pp. 337-40.

<sup>381</sup>Ovington, p.117.

<sup>382</sup>Tavernier, vol. i, p. 92.

<sup>383</sup>Jouhar, *Tezkerem al vakiat or private memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p. 89

<sup>384</sup>A.K, vol. iii, p. 18.

<sup>385</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 343.

The elephant *Hawai*, one of the special elephants of Akbar and was so powerful a beast that many well-experienced drivers feared riding it. Once when Akbar mounted it outside the fort of Agra, it went violent and started combating against the elephant *Ran Bagha* which almost was his match in qualities. Atagha Khan, the prime minister tried convincing him to dismount immediately but Akbar did not. The elephant *Hawai* forced *Ran Bagha* to run away from the spot but *Hawai* was not willing to let him go and so it followed *Ran Bagha* until they reached the head of the bridge on the river *jumna*. The terrified *Ran Bagha* went on to the bridge and *Hawai* followed it again. Fortunately both safely traversed the bridge and *Ran Bagha* somehow managed to escape from there.<sup>386</sup> In another time, once when Birbal was attacked by a raging elephant, Akbar came rushing to save him. In his endeavour to protect Birbal, he attracted the berserk animal towards him. Howbeit, suddenly, “it stood still, overcome by the majestic “*Avaunt*” (*Durbash*).”<sup>387</sup>

The deliberate and repeated actions of Akbar of endangering his life (as explained by him) was due to the reason that he wanted to keep testing himself and knowing the will of God, “our knowingly and intentionally mounting on *mast*, murderous elephants when they have a moment previous brought their drivers under their feet and killed them, and when they have slain many a man, has this for its cause and motive that if I have knowingly made an aspiration which was not according to His pleasure, may that elephant finish us, for we cannot support the burden of life under God’s displeasure.”<sup>388</sup> Thus the narrow escape of Akbar from his such intentional and hazardous deeds was for Akbar a sign from God that so far he had been just in carrying out his functions as an Emperor and therefore, it was God’s will that Akbar continue to rule the Empire.

Bernier informs that it was when the Emperor was able to successfully hunt lions, it was ‘considered a favourable omen’ while on the other hand, by any reason the getting away of the beast meant an extremely bad omen ‘portentous of infinite evil to the state’ and this was ‘attended with much grave ceremony.’ This was the reason why when a lion escaped during the hunt, Shahjahan did not rest till the time he had captured the escaped lion.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>386</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 233-34.

<sup>387</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 654.

<sup>388</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 234-25.

<sup>389</sup>Bernier, pp. 379-80.

In the above examples we observe that successful capturing of an animal/animals or their killing during the hunt was seen as a good omen of a victory in a battle. And not to forget, the hunt was a royal pastime as well as an exclusive imperial right. Now we will look at the instances when the Emperor abandoned his elite right of hunt. At Patan Akbar after visiting the tomb of the saint Ganj Shakar, went for a *Qamarghah* hunt in a place called Nandanah and in four days, many animals were caught and killed. But all of a sudden, he called off the hunting and ordered all the animals caught to be released. And under a tree he performed charity by distributing much gold to the faqirs and poor, and ordered for the construction of 'a lofty building, and an extensive garden' there. He also cut his hair.<sup>390</sup> Abul Fazl in *Akbarnama* writes that he had some kind of divine revelation and so he ordered for the release of the animals caught and the act of cutting his hair, as per Fazl, was actually a token of acknowledgements to God.<sup>391</sup>

There were certain fixed days when the Emperor would not go hunting. Akbar and Jahangir would not hunt with *cheetahs* on a Friday. One day Jahangir who was still in his mother's womb, made no usual movements. When Akbar was informed of the matter, at that time he was engaged in hunting with *cheetahs* and the day was a Friday. For the purpose of his child's safety, he made a vow that during his life he would not hunt with *cheetahs* on a Friday. Finally he was informed about the well-being of the foetus.<sup>392</sup> Likewise, when Prince Shuja was affected by a disease and even after devising many remedies, he would not be relieved of it; thereafter, Jahangir vowed to give up hunting with gun and would not injure any creature with his own hand.<sup>393</sup> Soon Shuja recovered.<sup>394</sup>

Certain days were fixed when the killing of animals was completely forbidden. Badauni says that on the first day of the week i.e., on Sundays (sacred to the Sun), during the first eighteen days of the month of *Farwardin*, the whole month of *Aban* (the month in which Akbar was born); and so on flesh-eating was not allowed. Badauni firmly believes that Akbar did so because he wished to please the Hindus. Everyone was to abide by the order or else punishments were awarded for defiance and his property was confiscated.<sup>395</sup> He records some

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<sup>390</sup>Badauni, vol ii, pp. 260-1.

<sup>391</sup>There is one Mughal painting depicting the event, entitled, 'Akbar Abandons Hunt near Bhera' in *Akbarnama*.

<sup>392</sup>TUJ, vol.ii, pp. 45-6.

<sup>393</sup>H.Blochmann is of the opinion that Jahangir's self-denial was not great; for when the prince was sick, Jahangir was fifty years of age, *Ain* vol. i, p. 301.

<sup>394</sup>TUJ, vol.ii, p. 45.

<sup>395</sup>Badauni, vol ii, p. 331.

more orders issued by Akbar for the purpose of pleasing his Hindu wives of prominent Rajas and his Hindu subjects to gain their goodwill. Akbar on the 36th year of his rule issued an order putting a stop on the consumption of beef and the flesh of other animals like buffaloes, sheep, horses and camels.<sup>396</sup>

Prohibition on killing of animals on some certain decided days was to actually exercise the stately mechanism of control by the Emperor on his people by deciding what they should be consuming and what was forbidden and unlawful for them and thus regulating their way of life on one hand and on the other, undoubtedly, to win the support of his subjugated Hindu chieftains and Rajas and the Hindu population. However, here what are of more significance is the cases of not exercising the royal privilege of hunting. While other royal privileges like holding of *darbars*, animal-combats, etc. were never put off (the only exception being was in the case of severe illness of the Emperor). Perhaps the Emperor somewhat related hunt to a violent activity for it required him to take the lives of innocent beings and therefore, sometimes by disassociating himself with such an act in matters of grave importance like the safety of his unborn or already born child, he tried to seek divine intervention.

### **Sports and Amusements**

Abul Fazl stressed that whatever HM did had a veiled purpose attached to it and only men of superior understanding could perceive his motive. His attachment to sports and means of entertainment was his way of being closer to God and worshipping him. The Mughal Emperor enjoyed a huge collection of sports and amusements. In the time of Humayun's reign, women were quite adept in sports and games. They played polo (*chaugan*), participated in shooting with the bow and arrow, and knew how to make thumb-rings and arrows. Some of them even wore men's clothes.<sup>397</sup>

#### *Chaugan* (Hockey):

Regarding *chaugan*, Abul Fazl writes, 'the game of *chaugan* strengthens onsets and hand-to-hand encounters, there is education for the strenuous, and improvement for horses- which is the

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<sup>396</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 388.

<sup>397</sup>Gulbadan, *Humayun Nama*, pp. 120-21.

choicest part of soldiering- H.M regards the pastime as worship under the guise of sport.<sup>398</sup> Abul Fazl again with the motive to attach a superior intention of Akbar and to glorify the purpose, with which he used to involve himself in sports activities, tells the readers that Akbar encouraged chaugan out of sensibleness and compulsion:<sup>399</sup>

It tests the value of a man, and strengthens bonds of friendship. Strong men learn in playing this game the art of riding; and the animals learn to perform feats of agility and to obey the reins. Hence His Majesty is very fond of this game. Externally, the game adds to the splendour of the Court; but viewed from a higher point, it reveals concealed talents.<sup>400</sup>

He would promptly highlight the proficiency of Akbar in the sport.

Akbar introduced rules and regulations of *chaugan*. He also added glamour to it. Gold and silver knobs were attached to the tops of the sticks of chaugan and by chance it broke the player who found it could keep it and Fazl adds that this was done 'For the sake of adding splendour to the games, which is necessary in worldly matters.'

Bernier too talks of this sport in his account, particularly about the fire ball which Akbar used for playing on a dark night.<sup>401</sup> But he too speaks of the danger involved while playing it for once there was a noble named Mirza Muhammad Sharif who was the son of Abdul Latif Qazwini who fell from his horse while playing the sport with the Emperor in the open space of Fathepur and died.<sup>402</sup>

Likewise, Abul Fazl records many incidences when the player was hurt and lost his life as a consequence of it. Ali Khan Chak, the King of Kashmir, while playing *chaugan* had suffered a severe gash from being terribly hit by the pommel of the saddle (*pesh-koha-yi zin*) and ergo, succumbed to his injuries. His son, Ysuf Khan Chak inherited the kingdom.<sup>403</sup> The young Mir Sharif Qazwini was thrown to the ground and became senseless and blood flowed from his ear and died.<sup>404</sup>

#### *Ishqbazi* (Pigeon-Flying):

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<sup>398</sup>A.K., vol. iii, p. 242.

<sup>399</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 310.

<sup>400</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 309

<sup>401</sup>Badauni, vol. ii, p. 86.

<sup>402</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>403</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 534.

<sup>404</sup>A.K., vol. iii, p. 242.

Akbar had five hundred *khasa* pigeons as per *Ain*.<sup>405</sup> Fazl says that ‘His Majesty, in his wisdom, makes it a study. He even uses the occupation as a way of reducing unsettled, worldly-minded men to obedience, and avails himself of it as a means productive of harmony and friendship.’<sup>406</sup> In his letter to Abdullah Khan of Turan, Akbar claimed his inclination towards pigeon-flying had been a “source of contemplation of deity” while in his letter to Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan he mentions that it was totally “out of pure sportiveness” which he denied in the letter to Abdullah Khan. To Khani-Khanan, he gave a detailed account of the nine pigeons sent by Abdullah Khan, their names, breeds and peculiar characteristics.<sup>407</sup>

Akbar had banned pigeon-flying for others. His interest in pigeon-flying is well reflected through the *Ain*. For Fazl, a common man engaged in pigeon flying, had actually just involving himself in ‘a dull kind of amusement’ but when Akbar, the Emperor, engages, he had a higher vision.<sup>408</sup> Abul Fazl justifies Akbar’s pigeon flying and his prohibition<sup>409</sup> on pigeon-flying by others.

### Wrestling:

Babur was very fond of wrestling matches. On many occasions the wrestlers were ordered to wrestle.<sup>410</sup> Babur once commanded the Hindustani acrobats to show some tricks at a feast attended by the Qizilbash, Uzbek and Hindu ambassadors<sup>411</sup> and was full of admiration for them. As per him their performance was a real tour de force, surpassing the ones from his country. He had compared many of the exceptional gymnastic feats of the Hindustani acrobats

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 312.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>407</sup> *Mukatabat-i-Allami (inshai Abul Fazl)* Daftar I, see Mansura Haidar’s comment, p. 30.

An extract from the letter written to Khani-Khanan on 16 March 1586:

...the envoy of Abdu’l-lah Khan had arrived, with various rarities, unique gifts and particularly varied species of pigeons, such as Diwanbegi and those of the breed of pigeons of Sultan Husain Mirza, and had thereby strengthened the bonds of unity and concord. Expresses his joy on receipt of the gift of pigeons, and at the arrival of young pigeon-fliers, particularly of a certain Habib whom he describes as a skilled and topmost pigeon-flier of Transoxiana... *Mukatabat-i-Allami* pp. 29-30.

An extract from the letter written by Akbar to Abdullah Khan on March 1586:

Referring to Abdu’l-lah Khan’s presents of Farghanian fairy flying-pigeons sent with able pigeon-fancier, Habib, Akbar considers their dispatch as a token of mutual friendship and expresses his joy on their receipt. Explains that some people may take these small birds as a handful of feathers as mere play or sportiveness; to a deeper insight, however, flying them and sweeping and playing them resembles the ecstasy of the dervishes which reminds one of the source (i.e. the creator) and that is why, he (Akbar) takes an interest in this activity. Assures that God the Omniscient knows that this casual occupation with such pleasures is simply a veil over his devotion to the Almighty and his soul is not satisfied only with apparent and outward things (i.e. wings and feathers). *Mukatabat-i-Allami*, p. 38.

<sup>408</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, p. 310.

<sup>409</sup> *Mukatabat-i-Allami (inshai Abul Fazl)* Daftar I, See Mansura Haidar’s comment, p. 30.

<sup>410</sup> *Baburnama*, pp. 427, 439, 440, 442-43, 455, 456, 459.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 426.

with those from his land, e.g. a Hindustani acrobat could perform somersaults three or four times while an acrobat from his place could do it not more than twice; the former could walk on an untied pole, the latter used two poles as stilts, tied to their feet.<sup>412</sup>

Apart from the professional wrestlers indulging in the sport, there were instances when some of his courtiers too wrestled a few. Saqi Muhsin, a courtier of Babur who boasted of wrestling four or five men, was beaten by Shadman, another courtier.<sup>413</sup> Akbar issued an order that the umara of his court should wrestle with one another perhaps to make them physically swift and agile. Akbar himself by means of the balance of inspection picked out equally-matched antagonists. Akbar wrestled with Imam Quli Quci and M. Hindal did so with Yadgar Nasir M.<sup>414</sup>

There were many Persian and Turani wrestlers and boxers at Court and some from Kurdistan, Turkistan, Abyssinia, Bukhara, etc. Every day two well-matched men fight with each other. Many presents were made to them on such occasions. Abul Fazl in *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions the names of some of the best wrestlers at the court such as Mirza Khan of Gilan; Muhammad Quli of Tabriz, to whom Akbar had given the name of Sher-hamla, or Lion-attacker; Sadiq of Bukhara; Ganesh and many others.<sup>415</sup>

Jahangir asked Adil Khan of Bijapur, to send a *pahluwan* (wrestler), or a celebrated swordsman to his court if in that province there were any. After a while, Shir Ali, a wrestler was sent to him who put him to wrestle with the wrestlers of the Mughal court and found that none could compete with him. Pleased by his performance, Jahangir rewarded him one thousand rupees, a dress of honour, and an elephant and retained him in his service, and entitled him 'the athlete of the capital.' A *jagir* and *mansab* were too given to him.<sup>416</sup>

#### Gladiatorial Fights:

The Mughal gladiators were called *shamsherbaz*. They were enormously good in fighting and expert in executing breath-taking performances. They belonged to different categories. While fighting the sharp *shamsherbaz* used a range of weapons like shields, cudgels, etc and based on the type of defensive tools used by them, they were classified. Those using a small shield were

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<sup>412</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 427-8.

<sup>413</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 442.

<sup>414</sup>A.K, vol. i, p. 486.

<sup>415</sup>*Ain*, vol.i, p. 263.

<sup>416</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 335.

called *chirwa*; a *tilwa* used extremely big shields; *pharaitis*, yet another type of *shamsherbaz*, fought with comparatively less huge shield. Cudgel-users were *Lakrait*. Some of them would fight without any assistance of a weapon and use his only one hand. Therefore, they were named *yak-hath*.<sup>417</sup> There were several other types of wrestlers like *Bankulis* who were differentiated by their performances. In Akbar's time, there were more than one thousand of them, out of which one thousand were always present at court to perform the feats at the wish of the Emperor.<sup>418</sup>

#### *Chandal Mandal:*

Abul Fazl says that it was invented by Akbar.<sup>419</sup> The board had sixteen parallelograms, arranged in a circular form round a centre. Each parallelogram is divided into twenty-four fields, every eight of which form a row. The number of pieces is sixty-four and four dice are used, of which the four longer sides are marked with one, two, ten, and twelve points. The number of players is sixteen. Each gets four pieces which are placed in the middle. As in *Chaupar*, the pieces are moved to the right, and pass through the whole circle. The player, who is out first, is entitled to receive the stipulated amount from the other fifteen players; the second that is out, from fourteen players, and so on. The first player, thus, wins most, and the last loses the most, the other players both lose and win.<sup>420</sup> There were many different other ways too, invented by Akbar, to play the game. Abul Fazl describes twelve variations of this particular game. *Chandal Mandal* had twelve different styles of play and 16 people could play at a time.

#### *Chaupar:*

It was played with sixteen pieces of the same shape and colour with every piece moving in the same direction. Three dices were used by the players who were generally four in number. Two bands of equal size bisected each other at right angles to make the *Chaupar* board which somewhat resembled the present day *Ludo*.

In the forts of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, large boards of *chaupar* are drawn out onto the floor of courtyards. This was quite an admired game as the participation of the courtiers in *chaupar* was huge and surprisingly, around two hundred players could conveniently be engaged in the recreation. Though as per the general rule of the game, four was the standard number of players

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<sup>417</sup>Literally meaning one hand in Persian.

<sup>418</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, pp. 262-3.

<sup>419</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>420</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 317.



who could participate in it. Besides, not a single player could leave before he had played sixteen times. In consequence, sometimes the game was carried on for a period of three months. Abul Fazl writes that in between the game, the participants were offered wine to drink.<sup>421</sup> Fazl in the end of the description of this terribly slow and time-consuming game immediately adds his justification for playing it:<sup>422</sup>

Superficially considered, all this is mere play; but His Majesty has higher aims; he weighs the talents of a man, and teaches kindness.

### Cards:

Gulbadan Begum writes about different card games. In one game, there were twelve players and each got twenty cards. Each one of them was expected to have 20 *shahrukhis* and the losers had to surrender these to the winner.<sup>423</sup>

This was a popular game in Hindustan already. Akbar brought many innovations in the methods of playing cards. Altogether there were twenty known ways by which cards could be played in his time. The highest card was that of *Ashwapati* (Lord of Horses) which had a picture of a king on horseback with all the symbols of royalty. The second highest card was of a *vizier* on horseback, while other cards only had pictures of horses. Another game was *Gajpati* where the king sat on an elephant. In the third game, *Narpati*, the king was depicted with infantry. In the fourth, known as *Gadhpati*, the king's power was represented by treasury, arms, the fleet, nobles, geniis, wild beasts and snakes. In another game *Tipati*, the queen was found sitting on the throne surrounded by her maids. In one set of cards the king was inspecting merchandise, while other cards had pictures of animals of burden. In one set, the king was listening to music, and in another set he was distributing silver coins. These sets of cards numbered twelve in all, the king and the *vizier* were the valuable cards, while the other ten were equal in value. Jahangir like his father too enjoyed playing cards.<sup>424</sup>

## **Animal-Combats**

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<sup>421</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, pp. 315-6.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>423</sup> Gulbadan, p. 178.

<sup>424</sup> Roe, p. 33.

We get evidences of animal combats like elephant-fights, camel-fights and ram-fights at the court of Babur.<sup>425</sup> Interestingly Abul Fazl talks about a peculiar fancy of Akbar i.e. of watching spider fight.<sup>426</sup> Combats were held not only during *jharoka*, but we do have some references to nocturnal fights too. H. Beveridge says that the special night for such sport was the 14<sup>th</sup> of the Muhammadan month, i.e. the full-moon night, and the 18<sup>th</sup> *Amardad*, 1596, corresponded to about the middle of *Zil-hajjah* 1004.<sup>427</sup> It was during one of these night combats that Akbar received a violent attack by one of the fighting deers.<sup>428</sup> From Jahangir's time animal-fights became a ritualised activity.<sup>429</sup>

The European writing on Mughal court history was highly fascinated by the animal-combats and many had written about them. Peter Mundy records of frequent occurrences of combats between antelopes, wild buffaloes, boars, bulls, tigers, lions, and elephants. He was a little disappointed to see the absence of cock-fights which in Europe was a common sport.<sup>430</sup> About the antelope-fight he thought it to be a lean sport but the elephant-fight, according to him, was truly a royal sport for a common man could was beyond his limits or capacity to make arrangements for a brawl between two colossal and feral beasts. At Agra, the elephant combats occurred twice a week, *i.e.*, on Tuesdays and Saturdays in the afternoon time. Peter Mundy, fascinated by elephant-fights, gives a full description of the manner they were made to fight.<sup>431</sup>

First the Elephants appoynted for the day, which are usually one Couple-,other tymes there may be two and some tymes three Couple.The King cometh to the Jarooca \jharokha\ or windowe,that looketh into the River, upon whose strand, right before the said Windowe, being the place appoynted, they are brought ; with each a guide sitting on his Neck. Att the word given they are lett goe, and soe runninge one against the other with their Truncks aloft they meete head to head-.There they with their Teeth lye Thrusting and forceinge with all their strength, whoe are againe parted by their Keepers. But sometymes they will not be ruled by words.Then doe they apply fireworks on long Bamboes or staves betwene them", whose cracks and noyse, fire and smoake doe sever them (for they stand much in feare of it), soe let them joyne againe; this as often as they please. Sometymes one getts the victorie by over bearing the other in strength till hee

<sup>425</sup>*Baburnama*, pp. 426-427.

<sup>426</sup>*Ain*, p. 308.

<sup>427</sup>A.K. vol. iii, p. 1061.

<sup>428</sup>*Ibid.*; *Ain*, vol. i, p. 613.

<sup>429</sup>Roe, pp. 85, 91, 270.

<sup>430</sup>Peter mundy, vol. ii, pp. 126, 128.

<sup>431</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 127-8.

make him give way, which hee followes and if the other bee not too light for him, overtakes and overthrowes him sometymes, then lyes over him, foyninge... There Keepers or Guides are many tymes strucken of in the fight, but quickly gett up againe; but sometymes they are killed outright. Other tymes they are left to run after men on horseback, whoe are too nimble for him; for the Eliphant cannot gallop, only shoveling away hee may run somewhat faster then a man.

Manucci too gives an account of elephant- fights and the massive amount of hazard involved in it, especially the drivers were at a greater risk, and he records the kind of reception he received by his family before every fight, ‘the wives of the drivers remove their ornaments, smash their bracelets n put on mourning, just as if they were widows. if their husbands come back alive they give a great feast, just as if newly married; for in these encounters n combats the drivers put their lives in great jeopardy.’<sup>432</sup>

Bernier reveals that elephant combat was a kind of sport which was completely unfamiliar in Europe and was generally arranged after the conclusion of some important festivity. He too talks about the amount of risk and danger involved in such fights. Often the elephant riders were trodden underfoot, and killed on the spot, the elephant was trained in such a way that he knew the significance of dismounting the rider of his adversary, whom he endeavoured to strike down with his trunk. Considering the risk involved, the rider on the day of combat would take the formal leave of his family as if condemned to death. However, if his elephant emerged victorious, he would receive grand presents from the Emperor. But even if he was dead, his salary would be continued to his widow and his son would take his place. The danger of being trampled upon by the elephant was not limited to its rider alone but often some of the spectators were killed.<sup>433</sup>

Persian accounts too speak of the peril involved in this fight. However, they highlight the cases wherein the princes and nobles were exposed to danger; the driver being exposed to danger was of less importance. Akbar is believed to have died due to acute dysentery, induced by the unnerving conduct of Prince Khusrau at an elephant-fight. During the twilight years of his life, Akbar wished to watch a fighting match for the championship between Prince Salim’s robust elephant *Giranbar*, and the boisterous *Abrup*, owned by Prince Khusrau and wherefore, an encounter between the two was arranged. Rantahman, a third elephant as *tabancha* was chosen.

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<sup>432</sup>Manucci, vol. ii, p. 340.

<sup>433</sup>Bernier, pp. 277-8.

Akbar and Prince Khurram seated themselves at a window to catch the action, while Salim and Khusrau were mounted on horse-back. In the fight, *Giranbar* overpowered and battered *Abrup* thoroughly. Thereupon, *Rantahman* was sent for *Abrup's* aid, but it was stone pelted and injured by Prince Salim's men. The act made Akbar downright displeased and through Khurram, he warned Salim to prevent his men from doing so. Futile attempts were made to separate the beasts by the use of fireworks. In the meantime *Rantahman* was wounded more by *Giranbar* and eventually the two jumped into the river *Yamuna*. Further on the enraged Salim in the presence of the Emperor awfully assailed Salim. Akbar left the scene in a great fury. The next morning he complained of a severe exasperation due to the ill behaviour of Khusrau.<sup>434</sup>

Khafi Khan<sup>435</sup> too in his account gives us a glimpse of the elephant combats and that how the spectators were exposed to a high level of peril. During one of the elephant-fights under *jharoka* in the reign of Shahjahan, he ordered all the princes to catch the action mounted on horseback. The excited Aurangzeb, in order to get a closer view of the fight, kept on drawing nearer to the warring animals. Eventually, he was lashed out by one of them. Yet he stood firm on the ground and bravely hit the elephant with his spear. This enraged the giant to a greater extent and caught hold of the *Padshahzada*<sup>436</sup> and his horse, though the attempts were made to bring it under control through the employment of fire-works such as Catherine Wheels (*charkhi*), the blows of maces, the strokes of the driving-rods and so on. While Aurangzeb alighted from the horse promptly, grabbed his sword and re-attacked the beast. Concurrently, to his aid, Prince Shuja appeared on the scene. Nevertheless, due to smoke from the fireworks, the visibility was unclear and his horse was hesitant to move forward amidst the chaos and he fell off his rearing horse. Eventually, the coming of Raja Jai Singh, the mace-bearers and other royal servants and their attacks on all sides on the elephant, scared it away.<sup>437</sup> The incident clearly displays the fact that the elephant fight was a royal form of entertainment, laden with enormous risk-factors.

### Music

Babur was very fond of wine, music and parties. Nevertheless, listening to music was not a part of daily activities at the court of the first two Mughal Emperors. The major portion of their

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<sup>434</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, pp .520-21.

<sup>435</sup> *Akham-i-Alamgiri* or Letters of Aurangzeb too describes the similar event, p. 26.

<sup>436</sup> The term was used specifically for the male descendants of the reigning monarch.

<sup>437</sup> *Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-Al Lubab*, pp.4-5.

lives was spent in camps and they were left with a little time for enjoying music on a regular basis. Though whenever they caught hold of a moment to celebrate any occasion they enjoyed music, singing, dancing, and other such fun activities. Gulbadan Begum records the names of some females during Humayun's period like Mihr-angez Begum, daughter of Muzaffar (Hussain) Mirza, and grandchild of Sultan Husain Mirza who were excellent in playing many musical instruments. Sarv-i-sahi was a female singer and reciter in Babur's as well as Humayun's periods.<sup>438</sup>

From Akbar's period music became ritualised and was also a part of important festivities and celebrations at the court. Abul Fazl gives a list of a legion of musicians at the court of Akbar, belonging to different ethnicities (Iranis, Turanis, Kashmiris, Hindus...). They were proficient in playing different musical instruments like Bir Mandal Khan of Gwalior played on the *sarmandal*, Shihab Khan of Gwalior again and Purbin Khan performed on the *bin*; Usta Dost from Mashhad, played on the flute (*nay*); Shaykh Dawan Dhari, on the *karna*; Mir Sayyid Ali, of Mashhad, on the *ghichak*; Tash Beg, of Qipchaq, on the *qubuz*; Sultan Hashim, Usta Muhammad Amin and Usta Muhammad Husayn on the *tambura*; Usta Shah Muhammad on the *surna*.<sup>439</sup>

Many of Akbar's court musicians were from Gwalior. Miyan Tansen of Gwalior tops the list of 36 musicians, mentioned by Abul Fazl. In his praise, Fazl writes, 'A singer like him has not been in India for the last thousand years.'<sup>440</sup> Before this celebrated musician patronised by Akbar, he was at the court of Raja Ram Chand Baghela who was the Raja of Bhath (or Bhattah). Akbar asked the Raja to send Tansen at his court. Raja Ram Chand had to grant what Akbar demanded from him and sent his favourite musician with his musical instruments and many gifts to the imperial capital. On the first musical performance at the imperial court, Tansen was exalted by the bestowal of a whopping amount of two lakhs of rupees by the Mughal Emperor. Tansen remained at the Mughal court for the rest of his life and many of his compositions are dedicated to Akbar.<sup>441</sup> His great fame can be further elucidated by the fact that lying on his deathbed, Shaikh Salim Chishti who had already prognosticated his death<sup>442</sup>,

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<sup>438</sup> *Humayun Nama*, pp. 120-121, 282.

<sup>439</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, pp. 681-2.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 681.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>442</sup> TUJ, vol. ii, p. 70.

summoned Tansen (after obtaining permission from the Emperor) to listen to him sing<sup>443</sup>. On 26 April, 1589, Tansen had died. Akbar declared his death as the extirpation of melody and as a mark of tribute, directed every musician and singer of his court to chaperone Tansen's dead body to the grave, playing melodies as on the occasion of a marriage.<sup>444</sup> His son, Tantarang Khan was a singer at Akbar's court.<sup>445</sup>

Baz Bahadur, the ruler of Malwa, whose singers and dancing women were famous throughout Hindustan, especially the gorgeous Rupmati and who after the conquest of Malwa and his submission to Akbar, became one of the renowned singers at the Mughal court. Abul Fazl calls him 'a singer without rival.'<sup>446</sup>

The period of Akbar also marked the playing of music at its designated spot, *naqqarkhana*. Abul Fazl mentions a list of eight musical instruments used in the *Naqarakhana* which included the *Kuwarga*, *naqara*, *dahul*, *Karna*, *surna*, *nafir*, *sing*, and *sanj* or cymbal.<sup>447</sup> Akbar was excellent in performing, especially on the *naqara*. Earlier the band played in the evening time, and then before the crack of dawn but later it was played at midnight and the daybreak. The musicians blew the *surna* just before and after sunrise. Then the *kuwarga* was beaten after a while, followed by blowing of the *karna*, and *nafir*. Thereafter, there was a small break. Then they blew *surnas*. One hour later the *naqaras* would begin, and the musicians gave seven performances. While speaking of the performances, he writes that one of the performances played, called the old *Khwarizmite* tunes, HM had composed more than one hundred of them such as *Jalalshahi*, *Mahamir karkat*, and the *Naurozi*. Then there was the reading of sentences and poems for about an hour. It was concluded by the performance of the *surna* players. In the late evenings, before Akbar a singer holding a candle in his hand would sing melodious tunes.<sup>448</sup>

Gradually music was played in *diwan-i-am* as well. Tavernier informs us that it was here in *diwan-i-am* the arrangement of playing music was made even when the vital state businesses were being carried out and since the music played was so melodious and low in sound,

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<sup>443</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>444</sup>A.K, vol. iii, p.816.

<sup>445</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 681.

<sup>446</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 473, 681.

<sup>447</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 53-4.

<sup>448</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 51-4.

therefore, it hardly disturbed the court proceedings. Also during festivities there was an arrangement of a special tent in *diwan-i-am* where the nobles invited sang and danced.<sup>449</sup>

The *Maasir-i-Rahimi* mentions the names of the singers in the service of the *Khan-i-Khanan*. The *Tuzuk* and the *Iqbalnama* mention the singers of Jahangir's reign. Ustad Muhammad Nayi who was a flute-player in Jahangir's time, to whom Jahangir praises in his memoirs and calls him 'unequaled in his craft', was sent to him by his son, Khurram on his demand. The very first time when he heard some of his pieces (*majlis-saz*) and a tune composed by him for an ode (*ghazal*) dedicated to the Emperor, Jahangir rewarded him with an elephant with a howdah and permitted him to mount it before him and ride; scattered rupees about him and also had him weighed against expensive items, the value of which amounted to 6,300 rupees.<sup>450</sup> At the court of Shahjahan, Jagnath, who received from Shahjahan the title of *Kabrai*; Dirang Khan; and Lal Khan, who got the title of *Gunsamundar* (ocean of excellence) were the renowned singers. Lal Khan was son-in-law to Bilas, son of Tansen. Jagnath and Dirang Khan were both weighed in silver, and received each 4,500 rupees.<sup>451</sup>

Aurangzeb did away with a lot many rituals and ceremonials of the court. Saqi Mustaid Khan, the author of *Maasir-ul-Alamgiri*, gives two reasons for it: first, the Emperor had no liking for pleasure in general, and the second factor attributing to it was the fact that Aurangzeb was highly dedicated to his kingly duties and therefore, he was left with no time for celebrations and entertainment.<sup>452</sup> Aurangzeb stopped the use of music at the court but musicians were not restricted from coming to court and were given a good treatment.<sup>453</sup> He commanded that the chief musicians, Khush-hal Khan, Bisram Khan, Ras-bin, and others 'might come to the Court, but must not make music.'<sup>454</sup> When Bisram Khan, the chief musician died, his son, Bhupat was given robes as a way to express the Emperor's condolences to the family of the departed.<sup>455</sup> Besides, *naubat* (the band) continued playing tunes as before.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>449</sup>Tavernier, vol. i, pp. 81, 306.

<sup>450</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 376.

<sup>451</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p.682.

<sup>452</sup>M.A., p. 45.

<sup>453</sup>H. Blochmann writes that Aurangzeb removed the singers and musicians from his court because making and listening to music is *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. While Saqi Mustaid Khan, the official historian of Aurangzeb, informs that it was music which was forbidden from the court and not the musicians. *Ain*, I, p. 682.

<sup>454</sup>M.A., p. 45.

<sup>455</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>456</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 52.

Though Aurangzeb discontinued the playing of music at the court, but for the entertainment of the females of the Mughal harem, they were allowed to keep dancing and singing women. Each of them had their own cluster of musicians and they could not sing or dance before the other female of the harem but had to perform strictly before their master. Only when it was an occasion of some great festivity they were permitted to showcase their talent before a huge audience. The royal ladies awarded ranks and titles to them. Manucci provides with a list of the names of superintendants of the dancers and singers.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>457</sup>Manucci, vol. ii, pp. 312-4.



***CHAPTER 3***

***MANIFESTATIONS OF AUTHORITY AND SUBORDINATION***

The history of our world is full of examples wherein one's superiority was dependent upon another's submission.<sup>458</sup> And this was a very basis of a master-slave relationship, which in turn was one of the key factors for the preservation of the institution of kingship the world over. Many mechanisms were taken into account by various empires of the world to elevate the position of the Emperor to such a high pedestal that the rest would automatically look inferior and inconspicuous in the presence of him. The adoption of ceremonials and rituals within the courtly culture was one such mechanism. Since ancient times, the rulers of different parts of the world had imposed the performance of acts of humility upon their inferiors.

From the Achaemenid empire of the ancient Persia, we know of *proskynesis* (prostrating oneself before a superior)<sup>459</sup> while in ancient Japan, *dogeza*<sup>460</sup> (kneeling directly on the ground and bowing to prostrate oneself as touching one's head to the floor) was practiced. In 328 B.C Alexander the great, introduced *genuflection* (bending at least one knee to the ground, a gesture of deep respect for a superior) into his court etiquette<sup>461</sup>. In the Byzantine Empire, even senators were required to offer *genuflection* to the Emperor.<sup>462</sup> In the history of ancient India too, we have come across references to such acts of submission to one's superior as during the Gupta period, we hear of the '*staff*' or *dandavatpranam*,<sup>463</sup> the most extreme form of prostration in which the whole body is straightened on the ground before one's lord. As time progressed when Delhi came under the rule of the Muslim invaders, in the period of the Sultanates and the *Mughals*, the Sultans and especially the *Padshahs* introduced several elaborate rituals, festivities and etiquettes into their courts for the promotion of an unequal relationship with their nobles and subjects, them being the supreme head of their land and people.

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<sup>458</sup>Marc Bloch who wrote *Feudal Society: The Growth of Ties of Dependence*, says that in the European feudal period 'to be the "man" of another man' was a widespread trend. Farooqui, Amar, *Early Social Formations*, Manak Publications Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2001, p. 429.

<sup>459</sup>Frye, Richard, *The Heritage of Persia*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962, p. 95.

<sup>460</sup>Takamura, Kotaro-Sato, Hiroaki, *A Brief History of Imbecility: Poetry and Prose of a Takamura Kotaro*, University of Hawaii Press, 2004, p. 253.

<sup>461</sup>Chugg, Andrew *Alexander's Lovers*, Cambridge University Press, Shaftesbury, 2005, p. 103

<sup>462</sup>Evans, James Allan Stewart, *The Age of Justinian*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 101.

<sup>463</sup>Ali, Daud *Courtly Culture in Early Medieval India*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p.125.

## Deployment of Tactics of Authority and Subordination

The Mughal Emperor employed various tactics of domination to maintain the social hierarchy of the Empire at the zenith of which he was placed. The lure of gifts, awards of ranks and titles, prospect of promotions, etc. kept the princes and nobles tied to the Emperor. And those looking for the escalation in the Mughal social hierarchy and to be a part of the elect class, had to respond suitably to the honours and favours bestowed upon them by the master. Apart from ranks and titles and bestowal of presents, forging matrimonial alliances with the daughters of former potentates and local zamindars aided the Emperor in expanding his area of influence; whilst punishment was a direct form of striking fear and imposing his authority.

### Rewards

The Persian accounts are full of examples highlighting service rendered to the Emperor faithfully and successfully and the corresponding increase in their personal ranks, animals, and other favours and perks. The gifts were an indicator of social status of the giver and the recipient. They were treasured not only for their economic value but also for their intrinsic significance. Even when the beaten Mughal Emperor<sup>464</sup> or the rebellious prince<sup>465</sup> was a refugee, and was in a huge need of wealth to carry out his struggle, he would always maintain his social status by offering luxurious gifts to the person whose refuge he took.

The princess, *umara*(nobles) and *mansabdars* were entirely dependent upon the Mughal Emperor for their social standing in the courtly society. Being close to the Emperor meant having an access to the imperial favour and this was essential for their survival. The *Jagirdari*, escheat, titles, promotions, etc. made them entirely dependent on the Emperor. The favourites of the Emperor were frequently honoured with gifts and perks. When Jahangir learnt about the infirmity of Sir Thomas Roe and his cravings for wine and pork<sup>466</sup>, he right away ordered for

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<sup>464</sup>Humayun offered the famed diamond to Shah Tahmasp of Persia after his exile.

<sup>465</sup>When the rebel son of Aurangzeb, Prince Muhammad Akbar went to Persia and took refuge with the Shah there, he was given a grand reception. Shah Sulaiman specially ordered his officers to arrange every single item (dresses and perfumes made exclusively in Hindustan, betel, mangoes, pine-apples and other fruits) the Mughal Prince was accustomed in Hindustan. Moreover, the Shah himself received the prince when he was just a few distance away from Isfahan. On meeting the Shah, Shahzada Akbar offered him five pieces of diamonds and one very expensive ruby, saying, "Though the custom of meeting great men with gifts and presents in hand is not known among the respectable persons of Iran, yet in Hindustan it is considered lack of respect to come to the presence of one's patron empty handed." *Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-al Lubab*, p. 310.

<sup>466</sup>The flesh of a pig which was served to the sick Sir Thomas Roe was fetched especially from Goa, 'which at midnight was brought home by a *haddy* with this message: since it came to the King it had eaten nothing but sugar and butter.' Roe, p. 382.

making available as many glasses of wine as Roe wished for along with the pork. Jahangir without informing Roe about his intention to make him his disciple executed rituals involved in the initiation ceremony of *din-i-illahi*. He was given a *shast*, though exempted from performing *sijda*.<sup>467</sup>

Rewards were given to anyone who made themselves useful in any way in the administrative process or for aiding the Emperor to get hold of miscreants. Jahangir promoted all those who assisted his men to capture the rebelled Prince Khusrau and his supporters. 'I gave headship to those landholders who had shown loyalty, and to every one of the *Chaudharis* between the *Jhelam* and the *Chenab* I gave lands for their support.'<sup>468</sup>

### Reciprocity

Giving of gifts, promoting to a higher rank, entailed that the Emperor was pleased by the recipient and therefore, he had exalted him by such means. But on receiving them, the receiver had to respond to it. On accepting *khilat*, *naqqara*, and other royal favours the nobles had to pay a visit to a noble's abode by the Emperor was counted as one of the great royal honours. And on receiving him, the host had to make all grand arrangements he could to acknowledge his gratitude to His Majesty. It is reported that Akbar went to Raja Birbar's house to meet him. Birbar was one of the favoured men of Akbar. He had ordered the construction of stone-palaces for him. After the completion of them, Birbar wished the Emperor to see them and so invited him. Birbar organised a lavish banquet on January 1583.<sup>469</sup> Todar Mal, the *Vazir* of the Empire, was too exalted by Akbar's visit and in gratitude, he too arranged a great feast.<sup>470</sup>

In the attempt to demonstrate their gratefulness to the Emperor, some nobles were keen on maiming themselves too. Permitting any of his nobles to enter the Mughal harem was considered to be a great honour conferred on an *amir* as only a few trusted nobles had such a

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Interestingly, we notice that on one hand, Jahangir was delightfully offering pork to Roe while on the other hand, in his memoirs he enthusiastically records his act of demolition of a Hindu temple at Pushkar in 1613 because it contained an idol of black stone with a pig's head. However, of all the temples at Pushkar, Jahangir only ordered the destruction of this particular temple which was built by Rana Shankar, who was the uncle of the rebel Rana Amar Singh of Mewar, the son of Maharana Pratap Singh. Clearly, Jahangir's demolition of the temple was in sync with his motive to assert his sovereignty to unruly mortals. And to add, Jahangir halted at Pushkar, for he intended to personally siege Chittor and force the Rana into submission. So while on his way to Chittor, he destroyed every symbol, denoting the magnificence of his rival. However, from Pushkar he marched to Ajmer and sent his son, Khurram on the campaign which proved a great success. Rana Amar Singh submitted. See TUJ, vol. i, pp. 254-56.

<sup>467</sup>For details see Roe's Embassy, pp. 214-5.

<sup>468</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 69.

<sup>469</sup>A.K, vol. iii, p. 587.

<sup>470</sup>M.U, vol. ii, pp. 953-4.

rare privilege and there are instances which show that out of gratitude and as a proof of their loyalty to the Emperor for the grant of such a high favour, many opted to become impotent. Akbar allowed one of his nobles Shah Quli to enter the harem. Just after the first time he was permitted to enter the harem, he had his testicles removed (*majbub*). Consequently, he was called *mahram*, i.e. one who was admitted to the harem and knew its secrets.<sup>471</sup> Such a trend was visible not only among the Mughal nobles. Itimad Khan of Gujarat, originally a Hindu servant of Sultan Mahmud, King of Gujarat, was trusted by the latter. The Sultan admitted him to his harem and placed him in charge of the women. It is said that out of thankfulness, he made himself impotent by consuming camphor. He received many favours from the Sultan after it.<sup>472</sup>

Some nobles tried to go beyond the usual ways to express their gratitude to the Emperor. The author of *Maasir-ul-Umara*, Shahnawaz Khan gives examples to show that how far the nobles were willing to go to demonstrate their fidelity to the Emperor. Sometimes in order to obtain the imperial honour or favour, the nobles were willing to do obscure things. The author also cites an incident which shows that one of the nobles, Darbar Khan during the reign of Akbar, in his effort to show his fidelity to the Emperor, on his deathbed made a wish that after his death he should be buried at the spot where his master's dog was buried and that too at its feet. This very last wish of the noble amazed the author as according to him during those last moments of his life he should be occupied with the thoughts of *Allah* and not with the thoughts of world-worship.<sup>473</sup>

#### The Elect class ( *Khanzadas, Farzands, Followers of Din-i-Illahi*) and the favourites

The princes and nobles enjoying the closest proximity to the Emperor was the beneficiary of innumerable favours and honours. Jahangir awarded prince Khurram the title of Shahjahan and a golden chair to sit on as a mark of rewards for his victorious campaign in the Deccan. Shahjahan on the eve of his 65<sup>th</sup> lunar birthday conferred on him the title of *Buland Iqbal* on his eldest son, Dara and just as Jahangir gave a privilege to Shahjahan as a prince to sit on a golden chair in the court, likewise, Shahjahan as the Emperor, allotted this concession to Dara.<sup>474</sup>The

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<sup>471</sup>*Ain*, vol. i, p. 387.

<sup>472</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 418-19.

<sup>473</sup>M.U, vol. i, pp. 453-54.

<sup>474</sup>We have differing comments on the utilization of this privilege granted to Dara. Manucci says that Dara out of reverence towards his father never sat on the golden throne. Inayat Khan, the official court historian of Shahjahan, reports of Dara truly using it.

nobles were often referred to as the servants of the empire. ‘Jauhar Khan Habshi and Medani Rai, having been enrolled amongst the servants of the crown, were rewarded with suitable mansabs.’<sup>475</sup> While those who rebelled were referred to as miscreants; ‘ill-fated Khan Jahan’, and that they were doomed because they sided with the wrong side. ‘When this abandoned wretch found himself destitute and deserted on the death of Darya Khan, he gave himself up for lost and fled like a madman in the greatest desertion, seeking in vain for an asylum where he might be secure from the royal troops’; ‘the doomed wretch’<sup>476</sup>

There were certain titles which were reserved for an elect group of loyal men. *Farzand*, meaning son, was a title given to a limited number of trustworthy men. The implication of granting such a title was actually a way of securing the position of the empire and of the Emperor himself. Raja Man Singh was honoured with the title of *farzand*.<sup>477</sup> High posts were granted to *farzands*. Islam Khan, was given the governorship of Bengal and was made the tutor of Prince Jahandar.<sup>478</sup> Jahangir Quli Khan, the governor of the Subah of Bengal was Jahangir’s ‘special slave’<sup>479</sup>. Jahangir Quli means ‘slave of Jahangir’.<sup>480</sup> The nobles took the titles as an honour bestowed upon them and sometimes they even demanded the conferment of such titles on them. Adil Khan had asked for a royal *firman* from Jahangir, bestowing on him the title of *farzand* (son). Accordingly, a *firman* was issued, addressing Adil Khan as *farzand*.<sup>481</sup>

Apart from *farzand*, there were other terms used for establishing a bond between the Emperor and his men. Babar generally called a noble named Daulat Khan “father”.<sup>482</sup> Yamin-ud-Daula Asaf Khan, who was the *Wakil* of the empire, was addressed as “Uncle” (*Ammu*) affectionately by Shahjahan.<sup>483</sup>

Another class of favoured men were the followers of *Din-i-illahi*. Especially Akbar and Jahangir enrolled selected men as royal disciples. Selection as a royal disciple was a great honour for the chosen noble for they were taken from the favoured nobles of the Emperor. Sir

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<sup>475</sup> *Shahjahan Nama*, p. 63.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>477</sup> M.U, vol. ii, p. 49.

<sup>478</sup> TUJ, vol. i, p. 143.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 387-8.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>483</sup> *Shahhahan Nama*, P. 19.

Thomas Roe was favoured by Jahangir by enacting the service of initiation. The English ambassador while explaining the ceremony writes:<sup>484</sup>

I went to visit the King; who, as soone as I came in, called to his woemen and reached out a picture of him selfe in gould hanging at a wire gould chaine, with one pendant foule pearle; which hee delivered to Asaph Chan, warning him not to demand any reverence of mee other then such as I would willingly give; it being the custome, when soever hee bestowes any thing, the receiver kneeles downe and putts his head to the ground. So Asaph Chan came to mee, and I offered to take it in my hand; but hee made signe to putt of my hatt, and then putt it about my neck, leading mee right before the King. I understood not his purpose, but doubted hee would require the custome of the country called *Size-da*; but I was resolved rather to deliver up my present...

Just as rituals in *din-i-illahi* were meant to sanctify the ties between the Mughal Emperor and his selected men, a ceremony called ‘*homage*’ in feudal society of Europe was too enacted between a lord and his vassal. In accordance with the ceremony the vassal would take a pledge of lifelong personal loyalty to serve the lord. The ceremony was so vital that only after it the vassal was acknowledged as one of the lord’s men.<sup>485</sup>

*Khanzadas* were the house-born men and they were too recipient of many imperial favours. They were placed at high positions of the Empire. John. F. Richards is of the opinion that more than the followers of *Din-i-illahi*, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb were attracted towards the concept of *khanzadgi*. For the Mughal Emperors this was an ideal relationship with the Emperor.

Apart from the elect class of *farzands*, *khanzadas*, and the imperial disciples, there were a legion of favoured members. The favourites received special regal attention and honours. Sometimes, they were even excused for their misconduct. Akbar was very fond of one of her daughters, Aram Banu Begum. He many times had overlooked her rude behaviour. He time after time urged Jahangir to treat her properly after his demise:<sup>486</sup>

“Baba! for my sake be as kind as I am, after me, to t’is sister, who in Hindi phrase is my darling (that is, dearly cherished). Be affectionate to her and pass over her little impolitenesses and impudences.”

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<sup>484</sup>Roe’s Embassy, p. 214-15.

<sup>485</sup>Farooqui, Amar, *Early Social Formations*, p. 429.

<sup>486</sup>TUJ, vol. i, pp. 36-7.

Jahanara Begum though like any other women of Mughal harem was guarded by a number of women and eunuchs, yet in her apartments she used to manage meeting a man she liked. When Shahjahan was notified about it, he went to meet her at an unanticipated time. The completely baffled Jahanara hurriedly hid the man in a large pot used for the purpose of bathing. The composed Shahjahan had a light discussion with her daughter but before he left, he ordered the eunuchs to boil the water of the pot so that his daughter could bathe as ‘the state of her skin indicated a neglect of her customary ablutions.’ Shahjahan stayed there till the time he was convinced of the death of the man.<sup>487</sup>

Yet when Jahanara fell for another man, called Nazar Khan, he too was given the similar handling. He was an eminent figure at the court. Shaista Khan, Aurengzeb’s uncle, was highly impressed by him and even suggested him as a suitor for Jahanara but Aurangzeb declined the offer and was even apprehensive of their secret meetings. And thus one day he, in the garb of honouring Nazer Khan a distinguished favour, he offered him the poisoned betel in the court. The court protocol demanded that the beneficiary of such an honour had to masticate the betel in the presence of the Emperor. Following the court protocol, the man chewed the betel before the Emperor little he knew that his death was approaching fast. He died on his way to home.<sup>488</sup> In the above cases, Jahanara Begum was not punished for breaching the protocol prescribed strictly for the ladies of the Mughal harem.

Not only were the members of the royal blood but the efficient courtiers too exempted from any chastisement even after their misconduct. Akbar one day had remarked, “Todar Mal is very wise and prudent in financial and political affairs, but his unconcern and conceit cannot be approved.” Abul Fazl who was not on good terms with him brought up several charges against him. Emperor Akbar replied, “I cannot dismiss one whom I have nurtured.”<sup>489</sup>

The favourites and the elects had to exhibit their greatest reverence towards the Emperor. Abul Fazl writes:

Hence for the disciples of His Majesty, it was necessary to add something, viz., prostration (*sijda*); and they look upon a prostration before His Majesty as a prostration

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<sup>487</sup>Bernier, p. 13.

<sup>488</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>489</sup>M.U, vol. ii, p. 955.



before God ; for royalty is an emblem of the power of God, and a light-shedding ray from the Sun of the Absolute.<sup>490</sup>

### Matrimonial alliances

After the conquest of a territory, the daughters of the defeated Rajas, and zamindars were demanded and included into the imperial harem for the inclusion of the daughters of the vanquished potentates symbolised their submission to the Mughal authority. Aurangzeb wrote a letter to Muhammad Bidar Bakht<sup>491</sup> who was at that time engaged in capturing the fort of Sinsani and chastising the rebellious Rajaram Jat, the chief of Sinsani, telling him that though ‘Giving a daughter is a mark of Submission’ yet he should not compel the chief to leave the fort.<sup>492</sup>

Marriage alliances were also a source of gaining a good amount of wealth, thus enriching the imperial treasury. Akbar married Prince Daniyal to the daughter of the Khan Khanan, and gave a grand feast. By the means of this marriage alliance, he was presented a huge amount of gold, and other such valuable goods. Bernier informs that the worth of all the enormous precious items given was so high that the prince could easily equip the army from it.<sup>493</sup> On February 13, 1585 Bhagwant Das’s daughter Man Bai alias Man Bhawati was married to Salim and in March he was granted a *mansab* of 5000 *zat*.<sup>494</sup> Along with the marriage party when Akbar personally went to Bhagwant Das’s quarter, the latter in his honour arranged a splendid feast, and gave rich and large bridal presents and tributes. ‘These consisted of strings of Persian, Arab, Turkish and Cutch horses, together with 100 elephants and many male and female slaves- Abyssinian, Circassian and Indian. The dower was two *Krors* of rupees. The Emperor and the Prince were carried in litters on the road spread over with the pieces of rare cloth.<sup>495</sup>

Besides, the nobles entering into the alliance were personally benefitted as well. Bharmal of Amber, the son of Prithvi Raj Kachhwaha, was the first Rajput to enter into Akbar’s service. He gave his daughter to Akbar in marriage; as a result of this matrimonial alliance was raised to

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<sup>490</sup> *Ain*, vol. i, p. 167.

<sup>491</sup> He was the son of Prince Muhammad Azam and Jahanzeb Banu Begam (daughter of Dara). After the successful campaign against Sinsani in January, 1690 he ordered Rajaram Jat, the defeated chief to send his brother’s daughter and leave the fort.

<sup>492</sup> *Akham*, p. 59.

<sup>493</sup> Badauni, vol. ii, p. 403.

<sup>494</sup> A.K, vol. iii, p. 453.

<sup>495</sup> M.U, vol. i, p. 404.

the rank of 5000 *zat*.<sup>496</sup> His son Bhagwant Das too was raised to the rank of 5000 *zat* and posted as the Governor of Lahore.<sup>497</sup> Raja Suraj Singh Rathor, the son of Udai Singh, alias the Mota (fat) Raja<sup>498</sup>, gave his daughter Manmati to Sultan Salim in marriage. Nawwab Samsam-ud-Daula Shah Nawaz Khan, the author of *Maasir-ul-Umara*, writes that the matrimonial alliance brought multiple occasions of receiving royal patronage. He was distinguished by the allotment of his homeland (the territory of Jodhpur) as *Jagir (watan jagir)*.

Some nobles though in the service of the Mughal Emperor, not essentially saw a matter of pride and honour to give their daughters, nieces, or other female members of the family so as to be associated closely with the Emperor. Jahangir, in the first year of his rule, expressed his wish to marry the daughter of Jagat Singh, the son-in-law of Rao Bhoj Hara who was the son of Rao Surjan Hara. But Bhoj Hara rejected to give his assent to the marriage of his grand-daughter with Emperor Jahangir. This thoroughly enraged the Emperor and so, he decided to punish him after returning from Kabul. However, Bhoj Hara committed suicide. The marriage, albeit, was solemnised. The brunt of the incident was borne by his son, Rao Ratan Hara, too. He fell out of royal favour for a time.<sup>499</sup>

### Punishments

The Mughal Emperors were often blamed for being cruel and pitiless in giving out punishments. H. Beveridge, the translator of the *Akbarnama*, was bewildered by Akbar's brutal ways of punishing offenders and calls him 'ruthless and self-indulgent'. He gives many instances of his 'savage' means of punishments like once when a lamp-lighter had fallen asleep in a royal bed, he was thrown down from the battlements of the imperial fort. In another case, in 1581, on the banks of the river *Indus*, Akbar sent one of his men to search for a ford who went for 25 miles. The disappointed man returned because he was not able to find a single ford in that portion of the land. But when Akbar realized that he had not covered the land as far as he ordered him to, he immediately made him again go back till the appointed spot and tied him up with an inflated ox-hide and was thrown into the river. After a while, he was taken out of the water who was pleading incessantly for mercy and forgiveness; his property was seized and the man was sold as a slave. Yet on another occasion, when one of his courtiers came to him who

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<sup>496</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 410.

<sup>497</sup>A.K., vol. iii, p. 453.

<sup>498</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 114.

<sup>499</sup>The marriage of Jahangir with the daughter of Jagat Singh was momentous because princesses of Rathor and Kachhwaha clans of Rajput were to be found in the Mughal harem but none from the Hara clan, *Ain*, p. 510. Also see M.U, vol. ii, p. 603.

was drunk, Akbar ordered chilled water to be thrown at him. In due course, the much astonished man died of shock.<sup>500</sup>

Likewise, Beveridge accuses Akbar's grand-father, Babur, too for being harsh and ruthless. When Buwa, mother of Ibrahim Lodi, attempted to poison Babur, he in order to punish all the men and women who were a part of the conspiracy, commanded that the taster to be chopped to many pieces while the cook to be skinned alive; a woman was shot by Babur, and another one was thrown under the elephant's feet. Buwa was incarcerated. Later she was handed over to two of his officials, Yunus Ali and Khwajaji Asad and then to Abdul-Rahim Shiqavul. She was deprived of his property and slaves. His grandson, in consequence of her scheme, was removed from the court and sent to Kamran.<sup>501</sup> Kamran was one of the sons of Babur and interestingly, he was too punished by his brother, Humayun on account of his repeated disobedience and rebellions against his crowned brother. His half-sister, Gulbadan Begum's account, *Humayun-Nama* unexpectedly ends with Humayun's command to blind Kamran completely.<sup>502</sup> Jouher, the water-carrier of Humayun, too records this particular case of blinding of Kamran in *Tezkerem al Vakiat* and the day before he was blinded Jouher was appointed by Humayun to put a guard on him. The time when the royal order was being carried out, Jouher was a witness to this event. He gives a very dreadful description of it.<sup>503</sup>

Jahangir too had his rebellious son, Prince Khusrau blinded, though in his memoirs there is no direct mention of his son's blinding.<sup>504</sup>

Not only the rebelled princes were punished severely, but their allies were not spared too. Raja Bir Singh Deo was repeatedly chased by the troops of Akbar on account of his impudence to

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<sup>500</sup>See A.K, vol. iii, introduction, xiii-xv.

<sup>501</sup>*Baburnama*, pp. 373-75.

<sup>502</sup>Gulbadan, p. 201.

<sup>503</sup>Ghulam Aly who received the imperial order of blinding Kamran, 'twisted a handkerchief up as a ball for thrusting into the mouth, and he with the *Ferash* seizing the Prince by the hands, pulled him out of the tent, laid him down and thrust a lancet (*Neshter*) into his eyes (such was the will of God). This they repeated at least fifty times; but he bore the torture in a manly manner, and did not utter a single groan, except when one of the men who was sitting on his knees pressed him; he then said, "why do you sit upon my knees? What is the use of adding to my pain?" This was all he said, and acted with great courage, till they squeezed some (lemon) juice and salt into the sockets of his eyes ; he then could not forbear, and called out, "O Lord, O Lord, my God, whatever sins I may have committed have been amply punished in this world, have compassion on me in the next." Jouher soon after the blinding of Kamran, left the scene because he could not endure the pain Kamran was to go through. *Jouher*, pp. 105-7.

<sup>504</sup>With reference to his son's continuing efforts to depose him, Jahangir writes that in order to gain support, Khusrau showed men 'parts about his eyes, where at some time he had produced scars, of which the marks were still apparent, and told them that in the prison they had fastened cups (*katori*) on them and those were the marks.' Alexander Rogers, the translator of the memoirs, is certain of Jahangir's this course of action and asks, 'why should this imposter pretend that he had marks of the blinding?' TUJ, vol. i, p. 174.

slay the Emperor's one of the favoured men at the court. Once when he was out with a small group of his men, he was thoroughly chased by the imperial troops.<sup>505</sup> Many of the supporters of the rebelled Prince Khusrau was captured and strictly punished. When Khan Azam who was one of the supporters of the rebellious Prince Khusrau was caught, and brought to the court in chains before Jahangir, he dispossessed him of his property, and ordered the other courtiers to spit on his beard. He was imprisoned in Gwalior fort for two years.<sup>506</sup> Ultimately, when Khusrau was captured he was brought before Jahangir with his hands tied and chains on his legs from the left side after the manner and custom of Chingiz Khan. He ordered the two chief supporters of Khusrau, Hussain Beg and Abdur Rahim who were caught too to be put in the skins of an ox and an ass, and that they should be mounted on asses with their faces to the tail and thus taken round the city. As the ox-hide dried more quickly than that of the ass, Husain Beg died from suffocation. Abdur Rahim, who was in the ass's skin, survived the torment.<sup>507</sup> The offenders were completely degraded at the court. Mahabat Khan, Khan-i-khanan, brought the rebel Jujhar Singh, to the court like a criminal with a halter around his neck.<sup>508</sup>

For the courtiers who disobeyed or disregarded the royal instructions, they were forbidden to enter court for a certain period of time as a form of punishment and this was considered to be a great shame for the noble who was sanctioned from entering the court. On December 20, 1585 Bhagwant Das led the Kashmir campaign. When the army reached the Buliyas Pass and on account of excessive cold, rains, snowfall and lack of supplies Bhagwant Das found it difficult to proceed into the heart of the Kashmir, he sent a message to Yusuf Khan that if he did not submit, the Rajputs, despite famine and hardship, would sacrifice themselves and the consequences for Kashmir would be disastrous. Yusuf Khan was terrified and called on Bhagwant Das for entering into a compromise. Bhagwant Das made peace with Yusuf Khan on February 22, 1586 under the terms that the Kashmir ruler would deliver the land under saffron crop, duty on shawl and the mint to the Imperial treasury and would acknowledge Mughal suzerainty and that he would remain in charge of his principality. Bhagwant Das appointed officers to take charge of the three departments and on March 28, 1586 took Yusuf Khan to the court. But Akbar did not approve of the treaty and took the leaders of the expedition to task. Bhagwant Das was temporarily forbidden to enter Court and Yusuf Khan was placed under surveillance. Bhagwant Das who had not only made a treaty with Yusuf Khan but had also

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<sup>505</sup>M.U, vol.i, p. 423.

<sup>506</sup>De Laet, p. 179.

<sup>507</sup>TUJ, vol. i, pp. 68-9.

<sup>508</sup> *Shahjahan Nama*, p. 31.

pledged his word for his safety, felt greatly embarrassed and to save his honour struck himself with a dagger. Akbar very much pained at this incident, appointed top ranking physicians for his treatment and he recovered soon after.<sup>509</sup>

Raja Man Singh was the son of Raja Bhagwan Das Kachwaha<sup>510</sup> of Amber. He was one of the prominent *umara* at the court of Akbar. Through his loyalty and devotion he received the titles of *Farzand*, and Mirza Raja from Akbar. He was also the guardian of Prince Khusrau, the eldest son of Jahangir. He was appointed to chastise Rana Kika<sup>511</sup>, and a great battle took place at Goganda<sup>512</sup>. The Rana was wounded and fled. Raja Man Singh sent to the Court the famous elephant Ram Sah<sup>513</sup> along with other spoils. But, as it was alleged that he had strictly forbidden the soldiers from devastating the Rana's lands, the King censured him and recalled him to the court; and for a time did not allow him to pay his respects.<sup>514</sup>

In some cases, in order to set examples for others and keep the nobles disciplined, the Emperor ordered for the execution or incarceration of the offenders. Khwaja Muazzam, a full brother of Maryam Makani,<sup>515</sup> was infamous for his inappropriate behaviour. One day in the presence of Akbar at the court, he had a hostile argument with a high-ranking noble named Mirza 'Abdullah Mughal and in the heat of the disagreement he attacked him physically. He was discourteous to Bairam Khan once; he touched Khan's dagger. As a result, he was exiled from the court.<sup>516</sup> Later when he was re-admitted to court, his manner remained the same. Akbar received many complains of him mistreating his wife. He went to his house with twenty servants. He sent two of them to inform Khwaja about his arrival but the obstinate Khwaja refused to greet the Emperor, saying, 'I will not present myself before the King.' Having said this he killed his wife. When Akbar was informed about the horrid incident, he entered his house and ordered for his arrest. Khwaja was questioned about the reason for killing his wife but he kept on replying in a raving manner and used abusive language. Akbar imprisoned him in the fort of Gwalior where he died.<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>509</sup>M.U, vol. i, pp. 405-6.

<sup>510</sup>Raja Bhagwan Das was the son of Raja Bharmal of Amber (later Jaipur).

<sup>511</sup>Shah Nawaz Khan addresses Maharana Pratap Singh as Rana Kika.

<sup>512</sup>Both Abul Fazl and Shah Nawaz Khan do not call this significant battle as the battle of Haldighati (1576), but they simply refer to it as the battle fought at Goganda.

<sup>513</sup>Abul Fazl gives *Ram Pershad* as the name of this celebrated elephant caught in the battle of Haldighati.

<sup>514</sup>M.U, vol. ii, pp. 48-49. Also see A.K, vol. iii, pp. 244-45.

<sup>515</sup>Posthumous name of Hamida Banu Begam.

<sup>516</sup>M.U, vol. ii, p. 84.

<sup>517</sup>*Ibid.* ,pp. 85-86.

However, from Aurangzeb's reign the methods of giving out overt punishment were changed. He resorted to poisoning his officers clandestinely if their behaviour were to be found suspicious. Khafi Khan, the author of *Muntakhab-al Lubab*, writes:<sup>518</sup>

Yes! Owing to the humane and religious character which Aurangzeb had cultivated, his greatest punishment was reduction in the rank...

The author reports of a mischievous death of one Dilir Khan, a valiant officer in the service of Aurangzeb. It was suspected that Shahzada Azam paid a clandestine visit to him. When Shahzada Muazzam learnt about this, he immediately went to inform Aurangzeb. While the scared Dilir Khan consumed poison. Anees Jahan Syed, the translator of Aurangzeb in *Muntakhab-al Lubab* says that as per the popular belief, Dilir Khan was poisoned by Aurangzeb.<sup>519</sup>

A similar treatment was given to his nephew as well. After the capture (January 1661) and incarceration of Sulaiman Shikoh, Dara's eldest son, in the Salimgarh fort, he was brought before Aurangzeb in his *darbar* and was informed that he would be shifted to the Gwalior fort. Hearing it, the prince requested the Emperor to kill him speedily, and not to delay his death by making him consume the frightful opium drink. Aurangzeb promised his nephew that the drink would not be given to him. Nevertheless, the poor prince died after a year due to the consumption of opium in 1662.<sup>520</sup>

Aurangzeb never abused any of his officers in public, but had him poisoned or employed other such means if he wished to get rid of them. If Manucci is to be believed, Aurangzeb in his attempt to make his sons comply had silver chains specially made for his royal progeny.<sup>521</sup> He says that if any of his officers disregarded his commands, 'all he says is (and that in the softest voice) that he is only a miserable sinner, that there is no reason for astonishment if his orders are disregarded, since every day those of God Himself are neglected and repudiate.' And then he would repeatedly issue the orders till they were executed.<sup>522</sup> When one of the officials of

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<sup>518</sup> *Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-al Lubab*, p. 302.

<sup>519</sup> See Badauni, p. 303.

<sup>520</sup> *Shahjahan Nama*, p. 561.

<sup>521</sup> 'Then he called in the men hidden for the purpose, and ordered them to bring in the fetters already lying ready for use. Some, on the other hand, want to make out that these fetters were of silver, intended by Aurangzeb to terrify his son Sultan Muhammad if he were disobedient', Manucci, Vol. i, p. 304.

<sup>522</sup> Manucci, vol. iii, p. 248.

Aurangzeb, Zulfiqar Khan Bahadur Nusrat Jang<sup>523</sup> approached the Emperor to kiss his toes, in a state of confusion, he instead of kissing the Emperor's toes, touched his cushion (*masnad*). This made Aurangzeb irritated and he said, "You were absent for a long time and so have forgotten the etiquette of the Court." And ordered him to come to *darbar* wearing a pair of spectacles for three continuous days as it was a gift from the Emperor, and as was the rule when robes of honour were presented.<sup>524</sup>

Manucci narrates an incidence wherein once when Aurangzeb was up in the early morning to offer his *namaz* and ordered a eunuch to fetch him water for ablution. The still drowsy eunuch in a rush collided with the Emperor. But he was not chided for his slip up and Aurangzeb let him go by saying, '...thou shouldst reserve such fear for God, and thereby hinder thyself from offending Him...'<sup>525</sup>

## Responses

Responses to the Emperor's tactics of maintaining authority and subordination were many. Imperial favour to an individual over another created factions at the court. The vacuum lied between those who conformed and those who ignored and defied. Some skilfully adapted themselves to the expected courtly conduct.

### Adaptive

Court flattery<sup>526</sup> had always been one vital device in courtly culture to seek royal favours. Many courtiers adapted themselves and conformed to the courtly codes of behaviour. It was via court flattery, offering expensive gifts, etc. that they tried gaining Emperor's favour. The

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<sup>523</sup>Zulfiqar Khan, surnamed Nusrat Jang Bahadur, was a son of Aurangzeb's prime minister Asad Khan.

<sup>524</sup>Whenever the Mughal Emperor bestowed a robe of honour on any of his officials, the receiver had to wear the robe for three successive days and attend the court as a mark of distinction. *Akham-i-Alamgiri*, p. 62.

<sup>525</sup>Manucci, vol. iii, p. 246.

<sup>526</sup>The vice of flattery pervades all ranks. When a Mogol, for instance, has occasion for my services, he comes to tell me by way of preamble, and as matter of course, that I am the Aristotalis, the Bocrate, and the Aboiysina-Ulzaman, the Aristotle, the Hippocrates, and the Avicenna of the age. At first I endeavoured to prevent this fulsome mode of address by assuring my visitors that I was very far from possessing the merit they seemed to imagine, and that no comparison ought to be made between such great men and me; but finding that my modesty only increased their praise, I determined to accustom my ears to their flattery as I had done to their music. Bernier, p. 264.

official court chroniclers, who were commissioned by their Emperors to record the events of their reigns, heavily eulogise their patrons.<sup>527</sup> Ovington too notices the court flattery at the Mughal court and remarks:

That if they say at Noon-day it is Night, you are to answer, Behold the Moon and the Stars!<sup>528</sup>

Niccolo Machiavelli, the Italian historian, philosopher, and writer during the Renaissance period in his monumental work, *The Prince*<sup>529</sup>, writes that it was expected to offer valuable gifts like horses, armour, cloth of gold, precious stones, etc., to a Prince as worthy of their prominence so as to secure his favour. And with this motive he dedicated his work to Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici.<sup>530</sup> Likewise, in Mughal courtly culture, many Mughal courtiers adapted themselves to court flattery very efficiently. Hakim Abul Fath Hakim Humayun who subsequently changed his name to Humayun Quli, and lastly to Hakim Human, he flattered Akbar openly, adapted himself to every change in the religious ideas of Akbar, or even went in advance of them, and thus became in a short time a most intimate friend of Akbar.<sup>531</sup>

Abul Fazl, as H. Beveridge who translated *The Akbarnama* of Abul Fazl from the Persian puts it, was 'a great flatterer', and that his work was 'full of circumlocutions'. However, on being caught for their fake sycophancy, the flatterers consequently was in peril to lose the imperial favour. Shah Nawaz Khan, the author of *Maasir-ul-umara* cites an event wherein Prince Salim found Fazl's forty clerks at his residence copying the Quran and a commentary. He gathered all and showed to Akbar who became suspicious of his real intention. The author gives an expression to Akbar's plausible thought at this finding, "He incites us to other kinds of things, and then when he goes to the privacy of his house he acts differently." Shah Nawaz Khan informs that thereupon there was a break in their relationship. In consequence, he was sent to Deccan to bring Prince Murad to the imperial court and was instructed not to return and look

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<sup>527</sup>The authors at the court of Sultans of Delhi were not only adept in extolling their Sultans but also in sailing along with the current. Minhaj-us-Siraj Juzjani and Amir Khusrau were adept enough in eulogising their variable patrons. See Day, U. N., *Some Aspects of Medieval Indian History*, p. 148-66.

<sup>528</sup>Ovington, p. 111.

<sup>529</sup>Machiavelli's work is a rational guidebook, in the Mirror of Princes style. It contains rules for ruling, dedicated to the Magnificent Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, the grandson of 'Lorenzo the Magnificent' and a member of the ruling Florentine Medici family. The Mughals too encouraged didactic literature which was called *akhlaq*.

<sup>530</sup>Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, tr. N.H. Thompson, Cosimo Classics, New York, first published in 1910, Introduction, p. vii.

<sup>531</sup>Badauni, vol. ii, p. 214.



after the administrative affairs of the Deccan if the officers of the place were not performing their work properly.<sup>532</sup>

### Withdrawal

But not all courtiers were fortunate to receive the Emperor's attention. There were instances wherein the nobles who felt slighted and ignored opted to withdraw themselves from the courtly life and abandon the court. Abdul Qadir Badauni was one such noble from Akbar's reign who felt terribly neglected by his Emperor. In consequence, he frequently started absenting himself from his administrative duties which further aggravated the ire of Akbar. Badauni once went to Badaun, absenting himself from his post for a long duration of five months. When he returned from there Akbar asked him the reason for not attending his work. Badauni replied that his sickness prevented him from looking after his administrative assignments. Akbar said: "A sickness won't last for five months." The Emperor forbade him from paying his respects to him; he did not allow him to do *kurnish*. After a period of five months when Badauni returned from Kashmir to Lahore, this time Akbar granted him an audience.<sup>533</sup> Badauni was relieved:<sup>534</sup>

I offered him an *ashrafi*, and approached him with the greatest respect, and so the removal of that cloud of alienation and suspicion became facilitated, thank God for it!

Nonetheless, many times Badauni felt humiliated by Akbar's treatment towards him and he had recorded many such instances like once he approached Akbar to kiss his foot, but he withdrew it, which implied Akbar's displeasure with Badauni.<sup>535</sup> Akbar's method of dealing Badauni ultimately made him so hopeless of receiving any of the royal benedictions that he wrote in his work:

I have performed services without rewards, and undergone useless restraints, from which I can now be relieved only by the good humour of destiny.<sup>536</sup>

Another noble named Kaukab, who was also a *khanzada*, had been appointed to the Deccan army. For a long time, he did not get any promotion; he suspected that Jahangir was

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<sup>532</sup>M.U, vol. i, pp. 118-9.

<sup>533</sup>Badauni, vol. ii, pp. 396-97.

<sup>534</sup>*Ibid*, p. 398.

<sup>535</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>536</sup>*Ibid*, p. 210.

unfavourable to him and took to asceticism. Later he was arrested by Zahid, a servant of Prince Salim and brought him to Court. On learning the reason of the *khanzada's* desertion, Jahangir ordered to free him and granted him a robe of honour, 1,000 rupees for his expenses and also increased his rank.<sup>537</sup>

It was not only nobles who felt overlooked and resorted to withdrawal, but even the princes exhibited such withdrawal behaviour. Aurangzeb often felt ignored by his royal father. In May, 1644 Aurangzeb took retirement from his administrative work, 'as a protest against Dara Shukoh's jealous interference with his work and Shah Jahan's partiality to his eldest son.' The disappointed Shahjahan by way of punishing him for such an offence dispossessed him of his governorship, estates, and allowances. For some months the prince lived at Agra in disgrace. Later on the intercession of Jahanara who had recovered from an awful burn, he was restored to his rank and also the viceroyalty of Gujarat was given to him.<sup>538</sup>

### Abrasion

While some princes and nobles chose to defy the expected norms and protocols. Before the battle of Dharmat in May 1658, Aurangzeb had conferred *mansab* ranks and titles upon several of his followers-which was one of the exclusive prerogatives of royalty.<sup>539</sup> Aurangzeb's reign saw mutations in Mughal court ceremonials and rituals as well as many cases of defiance of prescribed protocols of the Empire. Jangju Khan Deccani, who held the rank of a Commander of Five Thousand cavalry, had placed his kettledrums on buffaloes and ordered them to be carried side by side with the kettledrums of the band of Nusrat Jang Khan on an equal footing.<sup>540</sup> Once a *faqir* was caught breaking a few steps of a mosque, where Aurangzeb usually used to go to perform his *namaz*. He was brought before the Emperor who asked the *qazi* what punishment he deserved. *Qazi* suggested that he should be decapitated for destroying the steps of the mosque and for speaking rudely to the Emperor. Hearing this, *faqir* replied, '...Are you not aware that the steps can be rebuilt as they were before? but take away my life, and you know not how to restore it.'<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>537</sup>TUJ, vol. i, pp. 441-2.

<sup>538</sup>*Akham-i-Alamgiri*, p. 6.

<sup>539</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 548.

<sup>540</sup>*Akham-i-Alamgiri*, p. 64.

<sup>541</sup>Manucci, vol. iii, pp. 254-55.

Some in their attempt to assert the influence in their assigned lands or provinces flouted the protocols. When Saf Shikan Khan Mirza Lashkari was appointed to Kabul by Jahangir, he organised a feast and invited the local mansabdars wherein he offered them roast pork to consume. When Jahangir was informed about it, he summoned Lashkari to the Court to clear the matter up. Lashkari told the Emperor that wine and pork were equally forbidden; notwithstanding here (apparently meaning in the court of Emperor Jahangir) pork alone was regarded as unsavoury.<sup>542</sup> In the aftermath of this, he was out of favour for a while.

### Implications of Authority and Subordination

Mughal court society was exceedingly a hierarchical one wherein social status was given the first precedence while the rest of the things like family, kinship, wealth, etc were derivative factors. Jahangir's incarceration of his eldest son, Prince Khusrau, Shahjahan's plot against Daniyal and Budaqi, Aurangzeb's execution of his brothers and nephews are enough examples of this. When Jahangir was informed of the flight of Khusrau from the imperial court on the pretext of visiting the tomb of his late grandfather, Akbar, he sent the *Amiru-l-umara*, Sharaf Khan to chastise him. Answering to his query to his course of action if Prince Khusrau refuses to submit, Jahangir says, 'If he will go in no way on the right road, do not consider a crime anything that results from your action. Kingship regards neither son nor son-in-law. No one is a relation to a king.'<sup>543</sup>

The Emperor's daily routine was actually a means of recurrent suppression of his men and his subjects. When the son of Rana Raj Singh of Chittorgarh was defeated by the imperial forces in 1654, he sent his son to the Mughal court with tributary offerings. Now sending his son and the *peshkash* symbolically denoted the vanquished power of the Rana by the mighty Mughals. He also sent his son to court to learn the court protocols.<sup>544</sup> Further, Shahjahan conferred the appellation of Sohag Singh on the Rana's young son as his name was still not determined by Rana;<sup>545</sup> the act clearly implied superior position of the Emperor. On the birth of a noble's child too, he had to bring his new born child to the court to be named by the Emperor. Bakhshi-ul-

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<sup>542</sup>M.U, vol. ii, p. 762.

<sup>543</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 52.

<sup>544</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 503.

<sup>545</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 503.

mulk Mukhlis Khan, had a son born to him, for which he presented *nazar* to the Emperor, who named the child Muhammad Hasan.<sup>546</sup>

Obtaining and then retaining the loyalty of his men, was too essential for the Emperor. Jahangir recorded many instances which expressed the fidelity of an individual and commended them for their loyalty. He in his autobiography had much-admired the loyalty shown by one of the concubines of Lal Kalawant in the service of Jahangir, ate opium and killed herself.<sup>547</sup> One of the nobles of Jahangir, Jalaluddin Masud, who held the rank of 400 personal, had died due to his habit of eating opium excessively. His mother too died just after a few hours of the death of her son by swallowing opium in huge quantity. Jahangir appreciating her fidelity towards her son and remarked, 'I have never heard of such affection on the part of a mother for her son...nothing like this was ever manifested on the part of mothers, Musalman/Hindu.'<sup>548</sup> He also much-admired Prince Khusrau's mother who also died of taking opium in large amount due to the rebellious nature of her son Prince Khusrau and the misconduct of her brother Madho Singh. He writes:<sup>549</sup>

...her devotion to me was such that she would have sacrificed a thousand sons and brothers for one hair of mine.

There were many other ways of controlling the lives of the nobles. The gifts ceremony, the dress they wore and other such ways of interacting with the Emperor actually encouraged consumption of commodities by the courtiers in order to strengthen their dependence on imperial salaries because the higher the consumption, the greater was the dependence on imperial salaries and high salaries was given to the ones holding a high rank and the high rankers were all loyal servants. Thus it promoted cultural ties to the court.<sup>550</sup>

The gifts were important for more than their economic value, they had symbolic significance. It helped in creating bond established between the donor and the recipient. Honouring someone with titles, gifts, or such imperial favour was always done in full view of the other members of

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<sup>546</sup>M.A, p. 235.

<sup>547</sup>TUJ, vol. i, p. 150.

<sup>548</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 141-42.

<sup>549</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>550</sup>The argument fits the doctrine of employers of the Industrial revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. like a glove according to which only the lowest possible wages would enforce the poor to work. Here also we see that a similar attempt to make men dependent on their income was made, but by the means of increasing the consumption of luxurious goods by them. See E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, first Vintage edition, Feb., 1966, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. & Random House, Inc., p. 358.

the court to create an atmosphere of competitiveness among the nobles to get such honour. Gifts were not only tools for aiding the Emperor to expand the Mughal bureaucracy but also a means of eliminating certain members of the court secretly. Muhammad Ibrahim (the commander-in-chief of the army of the King of Golconda) during its conquest was a key person to help Aurangzeb. In return, Aurangzeb put him in charge of the province as promised but he was well aware of the danger of leaving such an important province in the hands of a traitor. However, he could not openly do away with Muhammad and deny him the post as was agreed. So since Muhammad Ibrahim had not stipulated any time limit for his tenure, the Emperor soon within a few weeks removed him from the Governorship of the province of Golconda to that of Lahore. Later it was discovered that Muhammad had died on his way to the transferred province. According to Francois Martin, many *grande*s of Bijapur had met their deaths by wearing poisoned robes of honour, sent by Aurangzeb as tokens of his goodwill and esteem.<sup>551</sup> Even when the King of Golconda was sure of the imminent destruction of his kingdom, he sent valuable gifts to Aurangzeb and his ministers on a massive scale so as to mollify the Mughal Emperor.<sup>552</sup>

Gifts were an essential factor in forming an alliance with the members of the opponent party,<sup>553</sup> to appease or to pacify someone, doing away with unwanted participants of the court. But, just as the lure of increase in ranks, allowances and expensive gifts aided the Emperor in obtaining fealty of men to him, the lure of increase of ranks, allowances and expensive gifts, etc. made the nobles, women of the harem to enter into bargain with the plotting or scheming princes. Manucci says, 'when these princes once leave the paternal house, they work and scheme to make themselves friends. They write secretly to the Hindu princes and the Mahomedan generals, promising them that when they become the king they will raise their allowances.'<sup>554</sup>

One very significant aspect to examine is: was the strict adherence to courtly norms and protocols a means of ensuring success or was a little relaxation in some rare cases a wiser option to prevent a dent on the cachet of the mighty Empire. Akbar insisted throughout on the

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<sup>551</sup>Martin, Francois, Vol. ii, p. 1087. Also see Norris, p. 297; Bernier, p. 217; De Laet, p. 170.

<sup>552</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1023.

<sup>553</sup>Mirza Raja lured two or three prominent servants of Shivaji by promising them *mansabs* of 5,000 horsemen (*sawars*), *jagirs* in their native places and kettle-drum (*naubat*) if they deserted him (Shivaji). Their desertion created differences in the enemy's camp and thus submitted. Shivaji on meeting Mirza offered him a very costly ruby weighing fifty misqal and begged pardon for the offences. See *Futuh-i-Alamgiri*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>554</sup>Manucci, vol. ii, p. 320.

Rana's personal attendance at his court. He had sent many of his great Rajput nobles to him to coax him. Four missions were sent to him. In all of them, Rana insisted on exemption from attending the imperial court. Abul Fazl admits that Pratap received all the envoys courteously, entertained them, put on the royal *khilat* and once even sent his eldest son to Agra<sup>555</sup>. An interminable war was followed because of Akbar's intransigence, and it ended in the time of Amar Singh only after Jahangir had accepted this important demand of Mewar.

Akbar's assertion on Rana Sanga of Mewar personally coming to Mughal court and getting *tika* from him did not yield much positive outcome for the Empire. Rana never submitted. Mewar only surrendered during Jahangir's reign who granted Rana Amar Singh, the son of Rana, the concession of not personally coming to the grand Mughal court for the *tika* ceremony.<sup>556</sup> He instead sent his heir-apparent, Prince Karan to participate in ceremonies and rituals of obedience and subjugation. The subjugation of Rana of Mewar was a great accomplishment for the Mughals. Jahangir though showed flexibility in the observation of one ritual of the court; however, with the exploitation of another kind of ritual i.e., the exchange of gifts, he effectively won the compliance and service of the Rana of Mewar.<sup>557</sup>

On his first meeting with Karan, Jahangir placed the prince of Mewar in front on the right hand of him and bestowed upon him several other favours. Hereafter, Jahangir every day showered gifts on Karan. Jahangir also ordered full-sized carved marble figures of both Rana Amar Singh and Prince Karan to be placed in the garden below *jharoka* at Agra fort.<sup>558</sup> Jahangir writes:<sup>559</sup>

As it was necessary to win the heart of Karan, who was of a wild nature and had never seen assemblies and had lived among the hills, I every day showed him some fresh favour, so that on the second day of his attendance a jewelled dagger, and on the next day a special Iraqi horse with jewelled saddle, were given to him. On the day when he went

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<sup>555</sup>M.U, vol. i, p. 405.

<sup>556</sup>Rana Amar Singh requested Jahangir to excuse him from attending the Mughal for he was a pretty old man. Nevertheless, the Rana personally met Prince Khurram and presented *peshkash* which included a celebrated ruby, some decorated stuffs, seven elephants and nine horses. TUJ, vol. i, pp. 273-6.

<sup>557</sup>It was a Mughal custom that after the conquest of a land, the king surrendering to the Mughal authority had to come to the court for *tika* ceremony and also he had to stay there for a certain period of time so that he could learn rituals and protocols of the Empire. Prior to his training in Mughal modes of behaviour, he was considered to be a man of brutish manners.

<sup>558</sup>According to Alexander Rogers the marble figures are probably the ones which have commonly been supposed to have been put up by Akbar in commemoration of the two chivalrous men of Chittor, Jaimal and Patta, TUJ, vol. i, p. 332.

<sup>559</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 277-8.

the *darbar* in the female apartments, there were given to him on the part of Nur-Jahan Begam a rich dress of honour, a jewelled sword, a horse and saddle, and an elephant. After this I presented him with a rosary of pearls of great value. On the next day a special elephant with trappings (*talayir*) were given. As it was in my mind to give him something of every kind, I presented him with three hawks and three falcons, a special sword, a coat of mail, a special cuirass, and two rings, one with a ruby and one with an emerald. At the end of the month I ordered that all sorts of cloth stuffs, with carpets and cushions (named *takiya*) and all kinds of perfumes, with vessels of gold, two Gujrati carts, and cloths, should be placed in a hundred trays. The *Ahadis* carried them in their arms and on their shoulders to the public audience hall, where they were bestowed on him.

*Tika* ceremony was actually the way of making the subjugated ruler personally come to the Mughal court and pay homage to the Emperor, whose superior position was acknowledged by him in the presence of other hundreds of principle rajas, chieftains, and grandees who had been summoned by the Emperor to the imperial *darbar*. The ceremony was extremely important because after the completion of it the relationship between the Emperor and the new entrant to his court was solemnised. Akbar, in particular, was very obstinate in making the defeated potentates to personally come to his court and submit. Perhaps being forceful and assertive was the requirement of Akbar's time and therefore, the rituals and ceremonials he adopted were forceful and assertive in character as well.

In 1561-62 on the eve of the arrival of Akbar near Ranthambhor while on his way to Malwa, Rao Surjan sent a suitable *peshkash* to the Emperor and expressed his allegiance to him but refrained from paying personal homage to him. In 1567-68 the fort Ranthambhor was evacuated by Surjan's retainers and entrusted by Akbar to the charge of Nazar Bahadur.<sup>560</sup> But soon when afterwards Surjan recovered the fort, Akbar personally laid the siege to it. Akbar after capturing Chittor proceeded in the end of 1569, for the conquest of Ranthambhor.

Another dimension to look at is the way the preferential treatment shown by way of rewards, and honours created factions at the court, gave rise to court politics and intrigues. In his autobiography, Jahangir justifies his act of getting Abul Fazl murdered by Raja Bir Singh Deo, the Bundela Rajput<sup>561</sup> because Jahangir felt that Fazl was poisoning his father's ears against him. He writes:

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<sup>560</sup>A.K, vol.ii, p. 303.

<sup>561</sup>Raja Bir Singh Deo was promoted to the rank of 3,000 by Jahangir on his accession to the Mughal throne in appreciation for killing Abul Fazl on his order.

‘...his feelings towards me were not honest, he both publicly and privately spoke against me. At this period when, through strife-exciting intriguers, the august feelings of my royal father were entirely embittered against me, it was certain that if he obtained the favour of waiting on him (Akbar)<sup>562</sup> it would be the cause of more confusion, and would preclude me from the favour of union with him (my father). It became necessary to prevent him from coming to Court.’<sup>563</sup>

Aurangzeb always felt that he was never given fitting honour by his father. After the confinement of Shahjahan by him, he sent a letter to his father.<sup>564</sup> Bernier records the content of the sent letter in which Aurangzeb accused his father of his discriminatory treatment towards him:<sup>565</sup>

‘I cannot better explain my conduct than by stating that while you professed extraordinary partiality for me, and expressed your displeasure at Dara’s proceedings, I was informed, on indisputable authority, that you had sent him two elephants laden with golden *roupies*.<sup>566</sup> Thus is he furnished with means to collect new armies, and to prolong this disastrous war; I, therefore, put it to you plainly whether I am not driven by his pertinacity to resort to measures which appear harsh and unnatural? Is he not, properly speaking, the cause of your imprisonment? and is it not owing to him that I have so long been deprived of the pleasure of throwing myself at you feet, and discharging the duties, and paying the attentions, you have a right to demand from an affectionate son?...’

Besides, Aurangzeb was very suspicious of the feelings of his eldest brother towards him. Mir Jumla, the wazir of the king of Golconda, Qutb al-Mulk, was successful in amassing a great amount of wealth.<sup>567</sup> The king, in consequence, started seeing him as his budding competitor

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<sup>562</sup>Abul Fazl was not at the imperial court. He was sent to Deccan by Akbar.

<sup>563</sup>TUJ, vol. i, pp. 24-5.

<sup>564</sup> Before the letter of Aurangzeb was dispatched to the incarcerated Shahjahan, Bernier says that the content of the letter was made known to all and therefore, the genuine intention of Aurangzeb in writing it and his validation for the things he did in order to become the Mughal Emperor could be cynical and open for analysis. Bernier feels that probably this was ‘to deceive the public, and to reconcile them to the outrageous measures of which the *Mogol’s* adherents had so much right to complain.’ See Bernier, pp. 54-55.

<sup>565</sup> Bernier, p. 64.

<sup>566</sup> Bernier confirms this contention of Aurangzeb. ‘I have been told that *Chah-Jehan* did, in fact, send the elephants, with the *roupies* of gold, to Dara, on the very night of his departure from *Dehli*, and that it was *Rauchenara-Begum* who communicated the information to *Aurang-Zebe*.’ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.

<sup>567</sup>Bernier writes that Mir Jumla was commercially very active and carried out an extensive trading business with many parts of the world. He was also the owner of diamond mines under fake names. Besides, he was believed to have an unseemly relationship with the queen-mother. Bernier, pp. 17-18.



than a compliant servant of the court and so, he became determined to devastate him. When Jumla was reported about the king's intention, he went to Aurangzeb, who was at the time the Mughal governor of Deccan and proposed a plan<sup>568</sup> to seize the Golconda king. Aurangzeb accordingly as the Mughal ambassador, with his choicest cavalry entered Golconda, whose king as per the custom appeared at his garden to receive the feigned ambassador with usual pomp and ceremony. But one of the *umara* who was too a part of the conspiracy, overcome by the feeling of remorse, alarmed the king about the impending catastrophe. The startled king right away retreated to his fort. Aurangzeb then attempted to besiege the king in his fortress. However, due to the scarcity of proper war munitions, the siege was prolonged for two months. Meanwhile the royal order demanded Aurangzeb to establish a treaty with the Golconda king and go back to his province before long.<sup>569</sup>

This created a lot of frustration in Aurangzeb as he knew it was just a matter of time when the king of Golconda surrendered wholly. Above and beyond, the victory of Aurangzeb potentially would have been a cause of great concern for Dara who was already chosen the heir-apparent of the Empire; for so far he had been unsuccessful in proving his worth in military assignments.<sup>570</sup> Now Aurangzeb was convinced of his eldest brother, Dara's hand into the matter.<sup>571</sup> Afterwards, Dara convinced Shahjahan to issue further orders so as to restrict Aurangzeb's influence in Deccan.<sup>572</sup>

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He, after having assisted Aurangzeb in the siege of Golconda and thus, joining the Mughal service, on being granted the audience by Shahjahan, he presented him the famed diamond. Bernier, p. 22.

Dr. Ball in Tavernier's *Travels* identifies this diamond with that of *Koh-i-nur* which was taken to England in 1850.

<sup>568</sup>The proposed plan of Mir Jumla involved the marching of Aurangzeb to Golconda along with four or five thousand of his strong cavalry, pretending to be a Mughal ambassador, sent by Shahjahan, and finally, capturing the king of Golconda the moment he would come to receive him as per the required custom. Bernier, p. 20.

The treacherous ploy employed by Aurangzeb to capture Golconda finds no place in Shahjahan Nama, but, the deceitful plan of Qutb-ul-Mulk's was not ignored.

<sup>569</sup>Bernier, pp. 19, 20.

<sup>570</sup>His attempt to capture Qandhar was not of much consequence even when he had a huge imperial army at his disposal. Inayat Khan, the author of *Shahjahan*, was too full of praise for Aurangzeb's great military skill and his successful campaign in Balkh and Badakhshan in 1647, for more details see *Shahjahan Nama*, pp.384-400.

Inayat Khan also applauded his valiant effort in Qandhar campaign in 1649 in which despite the fact that he lacked heavy guns and expert artillerymen, for which he was honoured by Shahjahan. '...His Majesty directed that the kettle drums of rejoicing should be sounded and that the *mansab* of His Royal Highness Prince Muhammad Aurangzeb Bahadur should be augmented to the promotion of 2,000 more of his *suwar* to the level of *do-aspa* and *sih-aspa*, and fixed at 15,000 *zat* with 12,000 *suwar*—of which 10,000 were now of the above grades.' *Shahjahan Nama*, p. 433.

<sup>571</sup> Bernier says that Dara was petrified 'that if permitted to pursue his designs against the King of *Golconda*, he would become too powerful.' Bernier, p. 21.

<sup>572</sup> Bernier records the imposed terms on Aurangzeb, according to which '*Aurang-Zebe* should engage to abstain from all interference in the conduct of the war; fix his residence at Daulet-Abad; confine his attention to the government of the Decan...' *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Due to such reasons, Aurangzeb became more and more embittered towards his father and eldest brother and such was the feeling of resentment in Aurangzeb that he robbed his deceased father, Shahjahan off a great public funeral due to the Mughal Emperor, even when Jahanara requested for it.<sup>573</sup> Aurangzeb feared that the grand procession through the metropolis of Shahjahanabad would re-voke a sense of rage amongst the mob as was evident during the public parade of Dara Shikoh.

Astoundingly what Shahjahan did (honouring his eldest son, Dara greatly over his other sons) Aurangzeb as the Emperor too followed the same policy of honouring the eldest first and on many occasions admonished his sons for requesting him to grant some additional favours on their younger sons. He rebuked his eldest son, Sultan Muhammad Muazzam,<sup>574</sup> otherwise known as Shah Alam Bahadur, for asking him to bestow an added honour on his fourth and the dearest son, Rafi-ush-Shan and declined his request.<sup>575</sup>

Not only for the Emperor but the ceremonials and protocols were essential for the princes to generate a nexus between them and a set of men who were devoted to them. They aided in attaining and preserving goodwill of such men. And for nobles too they were a means of being a part of the Mughal courtly culture. The show of pomp and splendour was maintained by the nobles as well. Raja Man Singh had established wonderful pomp, greatness, influence and authority in Bengal. His panegyrist (*bad farosh*) had 100 elephants, and all his soldiers had good allowances.<sup>576</sup> He had a huge harem consisting of 1,500 wives and two to three children from each, but all except Raja Bhao Singh died during their father's lifetime.<sup>577</sup> When Khan Jahan Lodi was sent on the Deccan campaign, there were 15 *Panjhazaris* (of the rank of 5,000), owning flags and drums, like Khan Khanan, Raja Man Singh, Mirza Rustam Safavi, Asaf Khan Jafar and Sharif Khan Amir-ul-Umara, and 1700 auxiliary officers holding the ranks of 4,000 to

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<sup>573</sup>As per the narration of Inayat Khan, just at the outbreak of the dawn of 1 February, 1666, the dead body was secretly taken out from the Shah Burj and by the way of river, it was transported to the Taj Mahal, and placed next to the tomb of his late Queen, Mumtaz Mahal. This was the tragic end of Shahjahan, the Mughal Emperor, *Shahjahan Nama*, p. 565

<sup>574</sup>Jamshid H. Bilimoria, the translator of *Ruqa'at-i-Alamgiri* or Letters of Aurangzeb, informs his readers that Muazzam was actually Aurangzeb's second son; the eldest was Sultan Muhammad Bahadur but since the incarcerated son had died in prison in 1676, Muazzam logically was addressed as the eldest son. The letters were written after the death of Sultan Muhammad Bahadur.

<sup>575</sup>The basis for Aurangzeb's refusal to grant his eldest son's request was 'It is impossible to bestow such a favour upon a younger brother in supersession to an elder one.' Yet on another occasion when again Muazzam had requested to confer additional titles on his fourth son, Aurangzeb told his son that already Rafi-ush-Shan had numerous unnecessary cavaliers under him and 'It is not advisable to give more personal titles to the younger son than to the eldest. In order to please my son I shall have to show favour in another way.' Ruq., pp. 6, 136.

<sup>576</sup>M.U, vol. ii, p. 55.

<sup>577</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 57.

100. When owing to lack of supplies there was such a scarcity in the Balaghat area that a seer of flour could not be had for a rupee, the Raja one day rose in the Assembly and offered others to give the price of pan leaves. He gave Rs. 100 to every *Panjhazari* and at this rate made daily allowances to everyone down to the rank of 100. Every night he put money in a purse with the name of the person on it, and sent one to each. For the three or four months that this expedition lasted, he never once missed to send such gifts. For the men of the camp until supplies arrived, he sold provisions at the rates prevailing at Ambar.<sup>578</sup>

They would not hesitate to flaunt it in front of royal blood or nobles belonging to a higher rank. When the Raja of Bhojpur came to Allahabad to meet Prince Salim, he had a huge retinue, filling the city and the neighbourhood. 'Wherever he went, whether it was public or private, the place was full of his men.'<sup>579</sup> The very act of the Raja agitated the prince. In consequence, he had him decapitated through Zamana Beg who received the title of Mahabat Khan. The wealth he possessed was confiscated too.

But not all the nobles of the court indulged in ostentatious display. Mahabat Khan Khan-Khanan's special wardrobe did not cost five rupees. His expenditure on food was minimal too. During his march, kettledrums were not beaten even though it was one of the rare royal honours bestowed upon the Mughal nobles, only at the inception of the march, drums and trumpets were played. 'Pomp and show had no part in his life.'<sup>580</sup>

Gifts always constituted a vital part of Mughal ceremonials and rituals. But we do come across some instances wherein if rendered faithful service, the respective individual was not bothered with the ritual of presenting gifts to the Emperor or such offences were not taken too seriously. Mahabat Khan had not paid any tribute or *peshkash* to Sahajahan for a long period of three years. In spite of the fact, after the successful campaigns in Daulatabad, he was honoured with an amount of five *lakhs* by Shahjahan as a reward for his good service. Later, Mahabat Khan deposited 25 *lakhs* of rupees into the Royal Treasury as his tribute to the Emperor.<sup>581</sup>

In the end, even though the Mughal courtly culture was luxurious and elaborate by its nature; the protocols and codes of behaviour and rituals were well laid-out, yet in spite of all, total submission to the Emperor could never be obtained as there were always court intrigues;

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<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

besides, complete loyalty of all men could never be achieved. After the territorial conquest, some defeated rulers completely submitted themselves before the Emperor and gave the most precious and choicest gifts (*peshkash*) to the Mughal Emperor while some would conceal the best they had.<sup>582</sup> Besides, there were always some instances of pretensions of being faithful and obedient to realise one's goal. Codes of behaviour, prescribed norms and expected way of courtly life were imposed to minimize reoccurring of betrayal and defiance of the imperial authority.

Furthermore, even in the developed phase of the Empire attempts were made on Emperor's life. On 19 February 1654, on the eve of Shahjahan's 64th lunar year, after the customary observation of weighing his body against riches, he contrary to the usual custom, came down from the balcony of the Hall of Public Audience (*Daulat Khana-i-Khass-o-'Amm*), where he advanced to bestow favours among the crowds of people in proportion to their ranks. Unexpectedly Jasrup Mirathia, one of the state officials, with the intention to assassinate the Emperor, came rushing towards him with his drawn sword in one of his hands. However, the *kotwal* Naubat Khan, who was standing at the foot of the stairs of the *darbar* prevented him from attempting to do so.<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>582</sup>John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia in Eight Letters being Nine Years Travels*, Periodical Experts Book Agency, Delhi, 1698, p. 169.

<sup>583</sup>*Shahjahan Nama*, p. 495.

## ***CONCLUSION***

In a transitory monarchical world where the power rested with the most dominant and resourceful individual, and where allegiance of a person was continually shifting, it was necessary to formulate a set of mechanisms to retain power and authority. The Mughal Emperor formulated his own definite and elaborate symbolic expressions of power and authority. The adoption and utilization of rituals and ceremonials within the courtly culture and the amplification of customary royal extravaganza placed the Emperor at the centre of the stage. The Emperor stood at the apex of the social hierarchy of the Mughal society. He possessed supreme status, vast wealth, and great authority, making his figure loomed gigantically; his court attended by a multitude of lesser beings. The Mughal rituals and ceremonials reflected state ideology.

The territorial conquests kept the first two Emperors, Babur and Humayun utterly preoccupied with the formulation of political and military strategies. For them gaining political legitimacy was less of a concern than regaining their lost territorial possession.<sup>584</sup> Akbar on the other hand, inherited a legacy of political turmoil and was grappled with the recurrent problem of gaining political legitimacy. Akbar's quest for legitimization of his rule in Hindustan led to the centralization of the Empire. His syncretic ruling style enabled him to incorporate many of the indigenous components which were reflected through a series of his espoused rituals and ceremonials both at the court and beyond it. The Mughal court was now an institution which characterized the personality of the Emperor and his Empire, and his relationship with his subordinates. The moment an individual stepped into the highly hierarchal world of Mughal household, he set off on his journey in which he struggled to be elevated to a significant position. Acquiring the place of importance was a matter of honour.

Based on our study, we can infer that the rituals and ceremonials manifested themselves in Mughal courtly culture through several ways. The rituals and ceremonials fashioned the ambience of the court. The court without its members and appropriate formal procedures was not more than a physical space. The omnipresence of the court was made possible through the ceremony of exchange of gifts, awards of ranks, titles, robes of honour, etc. On receiving such honours from the Emperor the provincial governors had to perform all the requisite protocols of the court. And thus the feel of the court was re-created. Nonetheless, just as the rituals and ceremonials gave the court the sense of omnipresence, the court too had the potential to amplify

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<sup>584</sup>Babur though could not succeed in regaining his lost ancestral land (*Ferghana*), yet he laid a foundation of the Empire which left a massive impact on the present Indian sub-continent.

the outcome of an already critical event of the Empire or to even give a character to an occasion that might otherwise seem to be of much relevance. The occasion for celebrations or for the enactment of certain rules and regulations were numerous. They were observed in order to commemorate the Emperor's coronation, birthdays, victory over a formidable opponent or other such historic moments, recovery from illness, sometimes religious. The manner in which the court was decorated on such events where rituals and ceremonials were to be performed was actually an expression of the Emperor's might and riches; besides the number of participants and their social standing in the society again reflected the magnificence of the Emperor and his Empire. The display of expensive items created visual sumptuousness. Therefore, the court where ceremonies were held was as forceful in communicating power as the ceremonies themselves.

The rituals and ceremonials not only made the court omnipresent but the Emperor too was made omnipotent. *Jharoka-darshan* made Akbar an incarnation of *Vishnu* in the eyes of his Hindu subjects and the *darshaniyas* idolized him so much that they would refuse to put a morsel of food into their mouths without having a glimpse of him early in the morning. Also *jharoka* was the exclusive regal privilege and not anyone else could practice it in his domain. *Tika* ceremony facilitated him to incorporate subjugated indigenous potentates and *zamindars*. Through *tuladan* the Emperor acquired a benevolent character. Different forms of salutations constantly reminded the performer of the salutation of his depressed position before the Emperor and thus imposed a hierarchal relationship.

Interestingly, the Mughals not only maintained the hierarchy of men under their service but the hierarchy among imperial animals were evident too. They too were beneficiary of imperial honours and rewards. The *khasa* who were the most favoured ones and were from the imperial stables, their allowances of food, their paraphernalia, and means of transportation were all lavish which made them a distinguished lot. They had a number of servants to look after them. Like the Mughal officers, they too received titles, promotions, gifts, the privilege of beating of *naqqara* (kettle drums), etc.

The study also reveals that in the courtly culture, the courtiers were a tool for the Emperor and so was the Emperor for the courtiers. The Emperor as a man and the courtiers as men did not induce interest in either of the two. The Emperor needed them so as to demonstrate his power, wealth, and magnificence, whereas the courtiers needed the benefaction of the Emperor for

advancement of his social status.<sup>585</sup> The relationship between the two was symbiotic. But never did the Emperor revealed the fact and it was always asserted that the officials were dependent on the Emperor and therefore, they had to exhibit humble demeanour before the Emperor. The humbling of the nobles served the Emperor in not only self-idolization but also made them to deliver their services with fervour towards the Emperor for whenever the Emperor honoured any of his nobles, it was obligatory for him to reciprocate His Majesty's kindness.

We also see that the temperament or disposition of the Emperor was actually shaped by the personal occurrences in his life which caused the splatters of discontentment owing to the defiance or negligence of the expected courtly behaviour. In the initial phase of his rule, Akbar was known to be intolerant, but after the occurrences of one life-changing incidence in his life left him so baffled that he finally decided that the orthodoxy would not be entertained by him henceforth. It is to be noted that in this incidence, Akbar was overtly humiliated by the *Qazi-ul-Quzut*, Shaikh Abdun Nabi on his birthday (which was a festive moment for the Empire) by flinging a rod at the Emperor for sprinkling some saffron water on his clothes. Whilst Aurangzeb's ascendancy to orthodoxy was the result of the bestowal of several honours and perks onto his eldest brother, Dara Shukoh by his father. The showering of gifts, titles, ranks, etc. on one hand established a bond between the Emperor and the recipient, whereas on the other hand, it generated feelings of jealousy among those who were left deprived of such honours and different individuals reacted to it differently. Some opted for flattering the Emperor even more while some showed their bitterness through retribution. Aurangzeb chose the latter method and as soon as he acquired the authority, he ordered for the decapitation of Dara on the pretext that he was not a sincere Muslim and did not follow the tenets of Islam with conviction. Prince Salim (Jahangir) too had a similar *raison d'être* for getting one of his father's most cherished courtiers, Abul Fazl decollated.

Besides court rituals were rituals of authority and subordination. Jahangir in his memoirs frequently referred to his nobles as 'slaves' and 'servants'. Men who enjoyed the closest proximity to the Emperor though were the receiver of many imperial favours, but before that they had to totally submit themselves to the wishes of His Majesty. The higher the rank a courtier had, the greater was his subordination. The princes granted permission to sit in the

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<sup>585</sup>None of the Mughal nobles attempted to usurp the Mughal throne as in the case of the Delhi Sultanate. Even when the defiant general, Mahabat Khan made Jahangir captive, he did not attempt to seize the Mughal authority in his hands. The nobles only endeavoured to gain some significant position in the highly stratified Mughal society.



court only after the performance of all the required etiquette of the court before him. The salutation (*sijda*) they performed was the one which conveyed his humbleness and greatest gratitude towards the Emperor. Thus court rituals made his nobles entirely dependent upon the Emperor.

Rituals and ceremonials aided the Emperor to create an elect class of men; simultaneously they were responsible for encouraging factions at the court. The ones, who adapted themselves to the expected modes of courtly behaviour, resorted to court flattery and participated enthusiastically in various rituals and ceremonials. While some showed the withdrawal tendency and others transgressed. A few took to retribution as we see in the case of Shivaji and Aurangzeb. Thus this way they influenced the Mughal polity.

The men taking actions without the sanctions and seal of the Emperor were doomed and reduced to a mere candle-glimmer in the dark. While for the unknown conforming to the wishes of the Emperor, once admitted, encompassed the known. However, even after the ruthless condemnation of the offenders, the occurrences of defiance of the Emperor's authority were still prevalent. The cases of defiance became rampant in Aurangzeb's time. Looking from one angle, Aurangzeb's policy of enticing men belonging to the rival's camp through the means of gifts,<sup>586</sup> awards of ranks, titles, and other perks, created a severe crisis in *jagirdari* system. The salaries of many officers were paid in arrears. There was a lot of dissatisfaction among the officials and both the Persian and European sources of the period reveal that in desperation some of the officials were sending their resignation letters to Aurangzeb while others were resorting to bribes. Besides Aurangzeb, along with other traditional symbols of monarchy, did away with punishing the offenders overtly; instead he chose to punish them clandestinely. Perhaps this was because he was already infamous among his subjects for brutally decollating his brother and imprisoning his father.

Another aspect to be noticed is the exceptions evident in Mughal court society. The grand Mughal court culture encouraged the courtiers to splurge in luxuries so that the courtiers stayed dependent on the Emperor for their salaries. But there were a few who did not bother themselves with flamboyant display and yet they were placed at important positions in the Empire due to their efficiency in delivering their work. And sometimes transgressions made by the favoured ones were tolerated too. Therefore, this can be assumed that the nobles who were

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<sup>586</sup>Aurangzeb prohibited his courtiers from offering him gifts on his birthdays. Offering of *peshkash* was customary for the nobles and a part of celebrations at the court on the Mughal Emperor's solar and lunar birthdays.

proficient and favoured by the Emperor enjoyed the privilege of sometimes not conforming to accepted codes of conduct.

Another exception visible was with respect to the Emperor's prerogatives. The Emperor zealously practiced and safeguarded several of his privileges which established his exclusivity. The ones attempting to flout any of his exclusive privileges were awarded severest and harshest of punishments as a warning to others. However, we observed that the Mughal Emperor for a certain period of time would not exercise his royal privilege of hunting animals. This was the only prerogative of the Emperor which was continued and discontinued at his wish. Many a time the Emperor vowed not to kill any animal in his attempt to seek divine intervention in matters of critical significance such as for the well-being of his unborn child or so. Probably the Emperor linked the hunt as a violent activity.

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## *ILLUSTRATIONS*



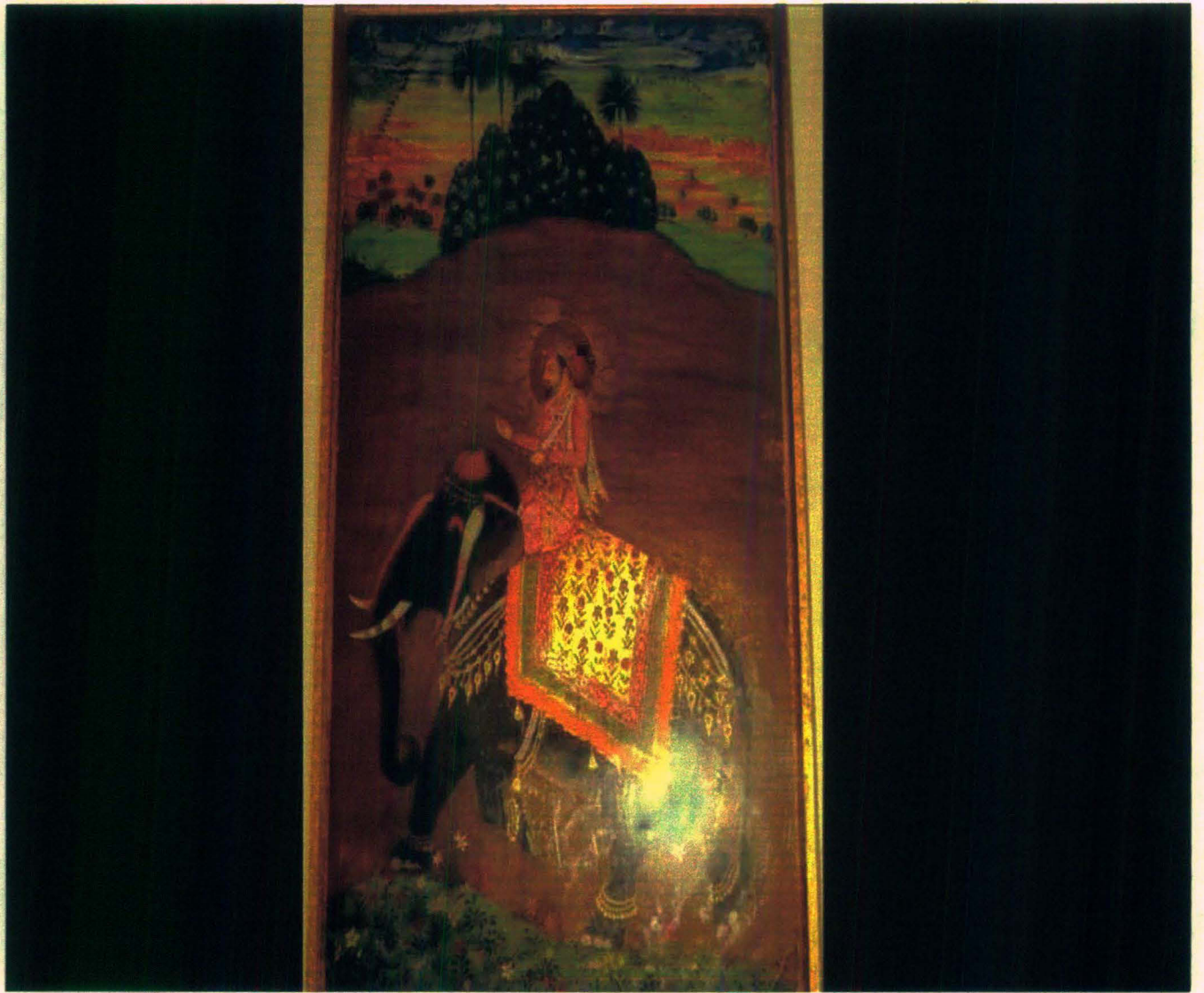
**Mughal Emperor Akbar receiving gifts, Mughal, Akbar period, circa A.D. 1590, Paper, 21.5 x 15.5 c.m.**

*Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.*



**Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) hunting; Mughal, Akbar period, Paper, 32 x 19 c.m.**

*Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.*



**Mughal Emperor Shahjahan on a Royal Elephant**

*Courtesy:* National Museum, New Delhi.



**Mughal Emperor Shahjahan in the marriage procession of his eldest son Dara Shikoh, Awadh, Provincial Mughal, circa A.D. 1740-50 Paper, 43 x 32 c.m.**

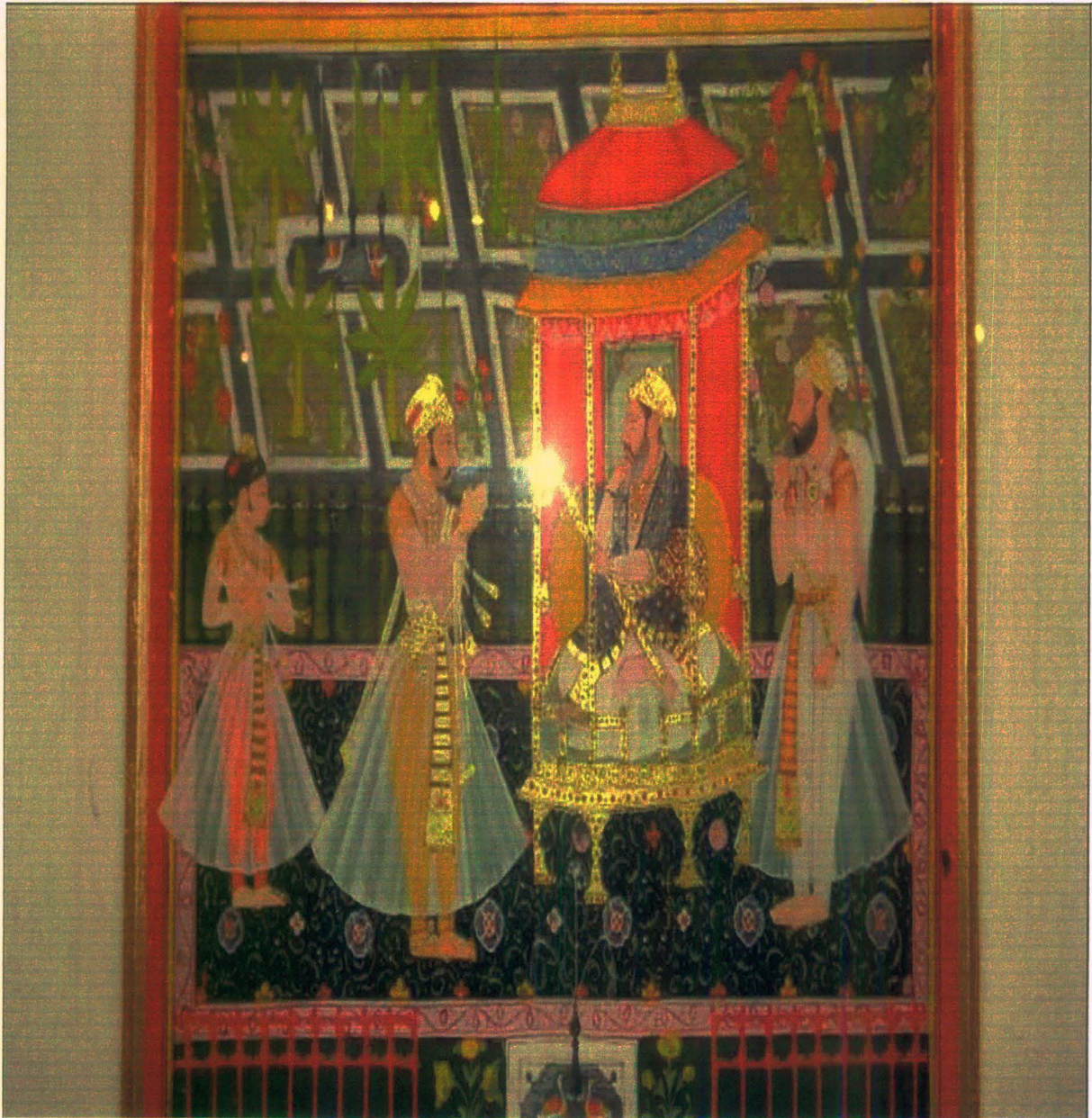
*Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.*



**Dara Shikoh viewing acrobats; eldest son of Mughal Emperor Shahjahan Mughal, Shahjahan period, circa A.D, 1640-50, Paper, 56 x 34.7 c.m.**

*Courtesy:* National Museum, New Delhi.





**Bhao Singh receiving sword of honour from Prince Muazzam son of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, Bundi, Rajasthan, circa A.D. 1690-1700, Paper, 27x31 c.m.**

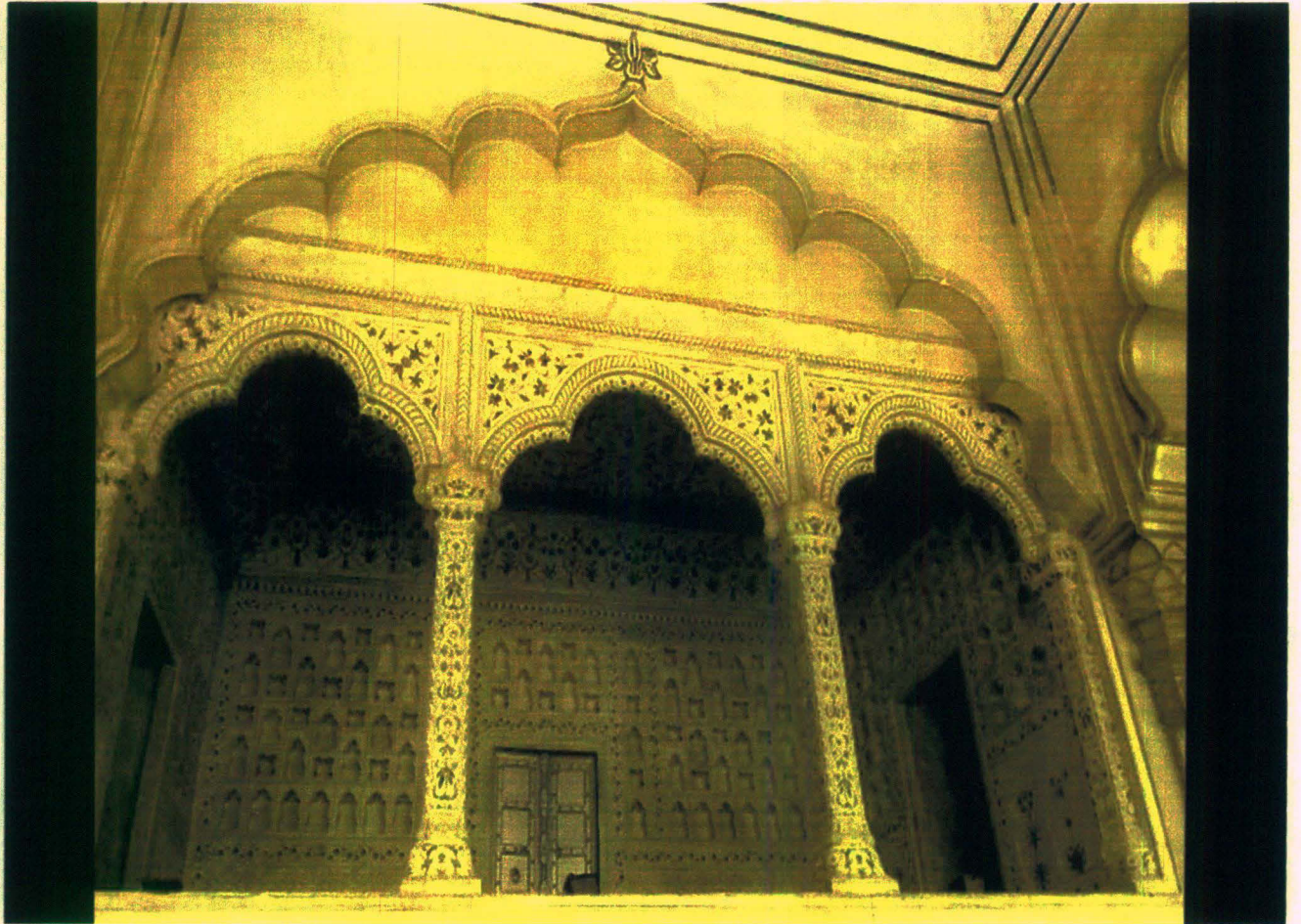
*Courtesy:* National Museum, New Delhi.



**The court of the Emperor Shah Alam II (1759-1806), Mughal, Shah Alam period, circa A.D 1800-10, Paper, 24 x 21 c.m.**

*Courtesy:* National Museum, New Delhi.

Below are some photographs taken by me during the field study for my research topic at Fatehpur Sikri and Agra.



**The elevated platform at *Daulat Khana-i-Khass-o-'Amm* (Hall of Public Audience), Agra Fort**

Sitting on the elevated platform where his *awrang*, or throne, was placed, the Mughal Emperor here used to give audiences to the assembled *umara*, foreign ambassadors, *mansabdars*, and *rai'yats*.



***Chaupar Board at Fatehpur Sikri***



**Horseshoes of the *Khasa* horses hammered onto the gates of *Buland Darwaza* at Fatehpur Sikri**

*Khasa* horses were the horses of the best variety and included horses from Imperial studs, horses of princes, choice horses of Arabia and Persia (Iran), and Turkish courier horses. They like other *khasa* animals were the recipient of innumerable special favours. The nailing of hundreds of old horseshoes we see in the above picture was actually one of the preventive measures against the evil eye (*nazar-i-bad*, *chashm rasidan*).



### JAHANGIR'S HAUZ (1610 A.D.)

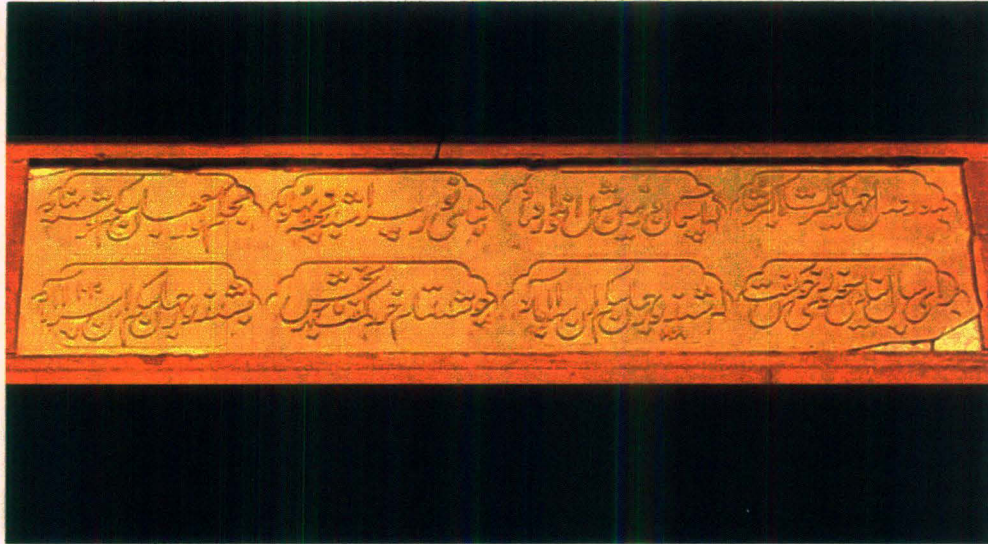
THIS CIRCULAR, BOWL-SHAPED, MONOLITHIC TANK (HAUZ) IS 5 FEET HIGH, 8 FEET IN DIAMETER AND 25 FEET IN CIRCUMFERENCE AT THE RIM. IT HAS STAIRS ON THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SIDES, WHICH SHOWS THAT IT WAS NOT BURIED IN THE GROUND AND WAS MOBILE, SO THAT IT COULD BE TRANSPORTED AND USED IN THE CAMP, AS WELL AS IN THE HAREM-PALACE, FOR BATHING. IT WAS MADE BY ORDER OF THE MUGHAL KING JAHANGIR. A PERSIAN INSCRIPTION WAS CARVED IN TEN ORNAMENTAL CARTOUCHES ON THE EXTERNAL SIDE OF THE RIM. IT HAD FIVE COUPLETS. ONLY TWO WERE READABLE AND MENTION IT AS "HAUZ-I-JAHANGIR" WHICH ALSO GIVES 1610 A.D. AS THE DATE OF ITS CONSTRUCTION.

IT WAS FIRST DISCOVERED IN A COURT OF AKBAR'S PALACE IN THE FORT IN 1843 AND WAS PLACED IN FRONT OF THE DIWAN-I-AM. IN 1867, IT WAS REMOVED TO PUBLIC GARDENS (COMPANY GARDENS) WHERE IT SUFFERED MUCH OF THE DAMAGE. SIR JOHN MARSHAL BROUGHT IT BACK TO AGRA FORT AND PLACED IT HERE. IT IS OWING TO THIS HAUZ OF JAHANGIR THAT THIS PALACE BECAME FAMOUS AS "JAHANGIR-MAHAL". THOUGH IT IS ONLY A PART OF AKBAR'S "BENGAH-MAHAL".

*Hauz-i-Jahangiri*

Here are a few pictures of the Lahori gate of *Nur Mahal Sarai* (at Jalandhar, Punjab) built by Jahangir's favourite queen, Nur Jahan. The figures engraved on it give us a glimpse of the amusements enjoyed by the Mughal Emperor.

Source: google images



***Inscription etched on the Lahore Gate of Nur Sarai***

The above inscription is from Lahori gate or western gateway of *NurMahal Saray*. It in four verses and reads:

- During the just rule of Jahangir Shah, son of Akbar Shah, whose neither Heaven nor Earth remembers.
- The *Nur Mahal Saray* was founded in the district of Phalor by command of that angel, Nur Jahan Begum.
- The poet happily discovered this date of its foundation. This *saray* was founded by Nur Jahan Begum in 1028.
- Knowledge of the date of its completion was found in the words: "This *saray* was erected by Nur Jahan Begum" 1030.



*Two horsemen playing Chaugan*



*A hunting scene*

Notice the huge size of the lion here; probably it was done to express the idea of the competence of the Mughal Emperor to hunt such mammoth, violent and ferocious beasts.)



*Elephant-Combat*



## Glossary

**Ahadis:** Cadre of high-status cavalymen employed directly by the Mughal Emperor.

**Amir:** A high title of nobility or office, used throughout the Islamic world.

**Amir-ul-umra:** One of the highest titles granted by the Mughal Emperors. Literally, the term means the chief noble.

**Arza-dasht:** Letter of petition.

**Bakhshi:** A military paymaster also in charge of military inspections and intelligence gathering.

**Darbar:** Holding of court at *diwan-i-am* and *diwan-i-khas*.

**Darvesh:** A devish, monk.

**Din-i-illahi:** Literally meaning “divine faith” formulated by Akbar.

**Gulalbar:** The screened-off living quarters and harem of the Mughal Emperor in camp.

**Haram:** Legally forbidden by Islamic law.

**Hadith:** A report of the sayings or actions of Muhammad or his companions, together with the tradition of its chain of transmission; the collective body of these traditions.

**Jagir:** Temporary fiscal right conferred by the Mughal Emperor to collect the land tax from a specified village, *pargana*, or large area.

**Jauhar:** Rajput custom of self-immolation by women on the eve of battle and men go for an all-out war.

***Khalifa:*** The *caliph* or the secular successor to the Prophet Muhammad who assumes leadership of the entire Islamic world.

***Khanazad:*** “Son of the house”, an officer boasting hereditary family service to the Mughal Emperor.

***Kos:*** A road measure of about two miles.

***Mansab:*** Rank, status and position denoted by numerical rank and title.

***Padshah:*** King.

***Pargana:*** An administrative unit.

***Qasidah:*** Long panegyric in verse.

***Qazi:*** Muslim judge who renders decisions according to the *Shariah*, the canon law of Islam.

***Qazi-ul-Quzut:*** Chief *Qazi*.

***Raiyat:*** The Mughal subjects.

***Rajas:*** Literally Kings; mostly important chieftains who had accepted the Emperor's sovereignty; sometimes title given by the Emperors to individuals.

***Sawar:*** Numerical ranking denoting the number of armed heavy cavalrymen each Mughal officer was required to bring to the muster.

***Shariah:*** Islamic cannon law derived from three sources: the *Quran*; the *Hadith* and the *Sunnah* (practice and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad).

***Shaikh:*** Leader or head of a Sufi order or hospice.

***Shast-wa shabah:*** Imperial seal and miniature portrait.

***Sijda:*** The extreme form of ceremonial prostration adopted by Akbar.

***Tika:*** The vermilion mark placed on the forehead of a Rajput.

***Umara:*** Plural of *amir*.

***Ulema:*** Men learned in the *Shariah*.

***Watan:*** Literally homeland.

***Wazir:*** Chief fiscal minister for the Mughal Emperor.

***Zamindar:*** Holder of hereditary superior right in land.

***Zat:*** Personal numerical rank held by a Mughal officer.

