

*Chapter XVII*

## AKBAR PĀDShĀH

At the time when the unlucky Humāyūn came by his death, Akbar, a boy of thirteen, was nominally Governor of the Punjab, though the real power lay in the hands of his guardian, Bairām Khān, a Persian of the Shiah sect, and one of his father's most devoted followers. When the news arrived, Akbar was hastily enthroned at a place called Kalānaur in the Gurdāspur district; the brick platform on which the simple ceremony took place is still preserved. Meanwhile, in the capital, Hemu, the minister of the Sur family, was making a bid for restoring Hindu supremacy. He proclaimed himself Emperor with the title of Rājā Vikramāditya, and by bribing the Afghan nobles managed to collect a formidable following. Bairām Khān and his young protégé advanced to expel the usurper, and the two armies met on the historic field of Pānipat. Hemu's troops attacked with much gallantry, and would probably have been successful had not their commander fallen from his elephant, pierced through the eyeball by an arrow. As was usual in eastern battles, the fall of the leader was the signal for a general panic, and the Delhi troops broke and fled. The dying Hindu was dragged into Akbar's presence and despatched. According to one story, Bairām Khān wished Akbar to flesh his sword upon his opponent, but the young Prince indignantly refused to do so. Following up his victory, Bairām Khān occupied Agra and Delhi, and the princes of Sher Shāh's family were allowed to retire to their estates. Gwalior and Ājmīr were taken, and Akbar was firmly established on his throne. The young prince, however, now found himself little more than a puppet in the hands of an intriguing Court. There were two factions, one led by the Regent, Bairām Khān, and the other by Akbar's foster-mother Māham Anaga, and her son Adham Khān. Akbar determined to rid himself of both. In 1560 he announced that he would take the reins of Government into his own hands, and the Regent received a polite hint to go upon a pilgrimage to Mecca. After an attempt at resistance, Bairām Khān





bowed to the inevitable and started off. He never reached his destination; on the way he was assassinated by a man who owed him a private grudge.

For the time being Akbar seemed to have profited little by the change. The power was now entirely in the hands of Māham Anaga and Adham Khān. In 1560 Adham Khān invaded the fertile kingdom of Mālwa, and laid siege to its capital, the fortress of Māndu. Māndu is a singularly lovely spot, and is adorned with buildings of rare beauty. Its ruler, Bāz Bahādur, was the son of one of Sher Shāh's generals, and his romantic love for his beautiful consort Rūpmatī has been often celebrated by painter and poet. Adham Khān advanced through Mālwa with fire and sword, leaving a trail of misery behind him. Bāz Bahādur fled at the approach of the Mogul forces, but when the conqueror entered the harem to take possession of the most coveted prize of all, he found Rūpmatī lying dead with the maids around her; she had poisoned herself rather than submit to his embraces. Mālwa now became a Mogul province, but Adham Khān behaved with great insolence on his return: he attempted to annex the bulk of the spoils for his private use, and only surrendered them with a very bad grace. The climax came two years later when Akbar appointed a trusted servant, Shams-ud-dīn, as Prime Minister. Adham Khān with a party of ruffianly followers forced his way into the palace and proceeded to stab Shams-ud-dīn to death. Akbar, hearing the noise, rushed out and felled Adham Khān to the earth with a blow from his fist. He then ordered the attendants to pick up the unconscious man and hurl him over the battlements. Māham Anaga was so shocked at the news of her son's death that she turned her face to the wall and died. The rest of the petticoat faction were banished from the court, and Akbar was king at last, at the age of twenty.

Akbar as a boy had shown little inclination for study. He was the despair of his tutors. He could never be persuaded to learn to read and could barely sign his name. But neither writing nor reading were looked upon as indispensable to culture in the East; he had a prodigious memory, and would listen for hours while others read to him. He was endowed with the keen sense of beauty which distinguished all his family, and loved flowers and gardens,





buildings, pictures and music. He had an intensely enquiring mind, and was deeply interested in religion and philosophy on the one hand and in science and mechanics on the other. He was immensely strong, tireless, and utterly fearless. He could ride or march all day in the hottest sun; he could stun a man with his fist, and kill a tiger with a blow of his sword; he revelled in the joy of battle, and would mount horses that no one else dared to ride. He played polo in the dark with an ignited ball of his own invention. He would tame elephants that had run wild and killed their keepers. On the other hand, his mind was filled with a ceaseless desire to find the Truth, which haunted him throughout his life. His favourite poets were the Sūfi mystics, and in 1557, at the age of fourteen, he had a singular spiritual crisis. He mounted his horse and rode away into the desert, where he remained for many hours in solitary meditation. It is possible that even at this early age he experienced the religious ecstasy which Sūfis induce by the constant repetition of the Divine Name. These incidents appear to have been recurrent. At the age of twenty, he tells us, "I experienced an internal bitterness, and from lack of spiritual provision for my last journey, my soul was seized with exceeding sorrow."

Such was the complex character of the young prince who, having rid himself of various evil influences, emerged from 'behind the veil' in 1562 to find himself in charge of the destinies of an Empire. Akbar's originality of character soon asserted itself. Former rulers, with few exceptions, had been solicitous of the interests of their Muhammadan subjects only. Akbar had a wider vision. He would unite all, Muslim and Hindu alike, without distinction under the ægis of the Crown. One of his first steps towards the consummation of this plan was his marriage, in the same year, to the daughter of the Rājput chief, Rājā Bihār Māl of Āmber. Rājā Bihār Māl, together with his son, Mān Singh, and his nephew, Bhagwān Dās, were enrolled as nobles in the Mogul court and given high commands; Akbar had begun his policy of winning over his most dangerous opponents to his side. At the same time the *jizya*, or poll-tax on non-Muslims, and the pilgrim-tax, both of which were deeply resented by Hindus as badges of servitude, were remitted at considerable loss to the Treasury.



A vivid picture of Akbar's daily life when in residence at the Court has been preserved for us. Aroused at dawn by the playing of musical instruments, he devoted the earliest hours of the day to religious meditation. He then showed himself to the assembled people at the audience-window while the multitude came and prostrated themselves; the women brought their sick infants for the royal benediction and offered presents on their recovery. Next he went to the Hall of Public Audience. Here was held a levée, which was attended by members of the Royal Family and great Officers of State, and petitioners with grievances had ready access to the Royal Person. The Emperor impressed everyone by his accessibility and his kindly and affable manner. Affairs of State occupied most of the forenoon, and then Akbar retired to his apartments for the heat of the day. Here he partook of the single meal which was all that he ate; the food was of the simplest, for the Emperor was frugal to the point of asceticism in his private life, and in his later years he was almost a vegetarian. It was not right, he said, to make one's stomach the grave of animals. The afternoon was spent in inspecting the household troops and the stables; immense numbers of horses and elephants were kept, and if any of the animals were in poor condition, their grooms were punished. Akbar would then superintend any building operations which were in progress, or would visit the Imperial Arms Factory, in which he took a special interest. The Emperor was of a mechanical turn of mind. He had invented several ingenious devices, and had made a number of improvements in casting gun barrels which greatly increased their range and accuracy. After the business of the day was finished, there were recreations, such as polo, fights between animals in the open space outside the walls, and games of backgammon (*pachisi*) played with living pieces in the presence of the Court; the ladies at the harem looked on from behind their marble lattices. After dark, the Emperor listened to musicians, readers or story-tellers, or initiated religious or philosophical discussions which lasted far into the night. One of Akbar's characteristics was his power to dispense with sleep.

But in the earlier years of his reign, Akbar had little leisure. He tells us that he was compelled to abstain from philosophical discussions, "lest the necessary duties of the hour should be





lected." Until his Empire was reduced to a state of submission, no scheme of organised government could be introduced. The opposition came from two quarters, Muslim and Hindu. The earlier Mussalman aristocracy looked upon the Moguls as intruders, and many of them disliked Akbar's unorthodox "Persianised ways" and his liberal treatment of the Hindus. A rebellion of the disaffected Uzbek nobles, headed by Ali Kuli Khān, the Governor of Jaunpur, was crushed with merciless severity after a battle which took place near Allahābād in 1567. Akbar now turned his attention to the Hindus; already, in 1564, the fertile Hindu kingdom of Gondwāna had been annexed by his general Āsaf Khān. The beautiful and gallant Rānī Durgavātī, who led her troops to battle in person, stabbed herself to death, and Chauragarh, her capital, was taken. A far more formidable task now awaited him. Many of the Rājput chiefs had refused to respond to Akbar's attempt to win them over, and had deeply resented the action of Rājā Bihār Māl of Āmber in giving his daughter in marriage to a foreigner. The centre of resistance was Chitor, the capital of the Rānās of Mewar, the leading Rājput clan. Rānā Sanga of Mewar had been Bābur's opponent at Pānipat. Udai Singh, the present ruler, had given shelter to the fugitive Bāz Bahādur, and refused to present himself at Court. In 1567, Akbar determined to strike terror into Rājputāna by the capture of its leading fortress. The task was no light one. The first reconnaissance of the position was a failure, as the rains were so heavy that it was shrouded in mist, but when he again approached it in October he saw the great fort, crowning a hill which rose sheer out of the level plain, surrounded by battlements whose circumference was nearly eight miles. It was well supplied with water and provisions. Akbar's artillery made no impression on the walls, and an attempt to blow up a bastion by means of mines proved unsuccessful. Many of the storming party were overwhelmed in the explosion, and the remainder were driven back with loss. Akbar now constructed penthouses which overlooked the walls and enabled their occupants to fire upon the garrison from above, and it was from one of these that the Emperor himself, by a lucky shot, picked off Jaimāl, the "valiant unbeliever" who had been the heart and soul of the defence. Then the garrison lost heart.



Smoke began to appear, rolling in dense clouds over the fortress, and the Moguls knew that the rite of Jauhār had begun.

"The flames of the Jauhār and the lull in the fighting showed the besiegers that the garrison was in extremities, and they began to enter the fort in parties. Some of the boldest of the garrison who had no families to burn stood to their posts ready to sell their lives in defence. From the top of the penthouse the Emperor watched the combats, and ordered three elephants to be ridden into the town. One of them killed many of the enemy and though often wounded never turned tail; another was surrounded and killed with spears and swords. In the last watch of the night the besiegers forced their way into the fortress and fell to slaughter and pillage. At early dawn the Emperor rode in on an elephant, attended on foot by his nobles and chiefs. A general massacre was ordered. There were at least eight thousand fighting Rājput̃s in the fort. Some took their stand in the temple and fought to the last. In every street and lane and bazaar there was desperate fighting. Now and again a band of Rājput̃s, throwing away hope of life, rushed from the temple and were despatched in detail. By mid-day some two thousand were slain. Those who escaped were made prisoners and their property confiscated."

Akbar departed from his usual clemency to the fallen after the capture of Chitor, and 30,000 of the inhabitants, regardless of age or sex, were barbarously put to the sword. Apparently he thought it necessary to make an example. The town was ruthlessly plundered. The great drum which stood outside the palace door and summoned the clansmen to battle, the candelabra from the shrine of the Goddess and other spoils were carried off to Agra, and Chitor became a ruin, haunted only by the wild beasts. "From that day," says the historian of the Rājput̃s, "Chitor has been held accursed; no successor of Udai Singh has entered it, and 'the sin of the slaughter of Chitor,' like the 'curse of Cromwell,' has become proverbial." But Mewar never submitted. A handful of survivors escaped to the fortress of the Aravalli hills, where their heroic leader Pratāp Singh "single-handed for a quarter of a century withstood the combined efforts of the Empire, at one time carrying destruction into the plains . . . at another fleeing from rock to rock, feeding his family from the fruits of his native hills, and rearing the





...slung heir Amar amidst savage beasts and scarcely less savage men, a fit heir to his prowess and revenge."\* In 1576 he was defeated by the Imperial troops under Mān Singh, but made good his escape. He died in 1597, leaving his son Amar Singh to carry on the implacable struggle. After the fall of Chitor, Akbar proceeded to reduce the two great remaining strongholds of Ranthambor and Kalinjār. It is said that he entered Ranthambor disguised as a mace-bearer in Rājā Mān Singh's retinue. Sarjan Singh, the Bundi chief, who commanded the fortress, recognised his royal visitor, and almost instinctively seated him on the throne. Sarjan Singh agreed to surrender on condition that the Bundi rājās should never be called upon to give their daughters to the royal harem, that they should have the privilege of entering the Hall of Audience fully armed and not prostrate themselves before the Emperor, that their temples should be respected, that they should not be compelled to forfeit caste by serving beyond the Indus, that they should be exempted from humiliating impositions such as the payment of the poll-tax and having their chargers branded by the state, and that their historic capital should never be changed. In 1670 Akbar further cemented his ties with the Rājput̃s by marrying princesses from the families of Bikañr and Jaisalm̃r. By this consummate stroke of policy, he converted the Rājput̃s, hitherto the bulwark of opposition to Muslim rule, into his staunchest supporters; they were secured in their privileges and given a place at Court on an equal footing with the Muhammadan nobles; with prospects of an official career and honourable military service under the Crown.

After the campaign in Rājputāna, Akbar had a short breathing space to devote to domestic affairs. He had been deeply distressed by the fact that both of his children had died in infancy, and at the end of 1568 had gone to consult a hermit, Shaikh Salīm, who dwelt in a rocky cell near the tomb of the celebrated saint, Muin-ud-dīn of Chisht, at the village of Sikri, about 25 miles from Agra. The Emperor's prayers were abundantly answered. His Rājput̃ wife bore him a son, Salīm, named after the saint, in August, 1569. Another son, Murād, was born in June, 1570, and a

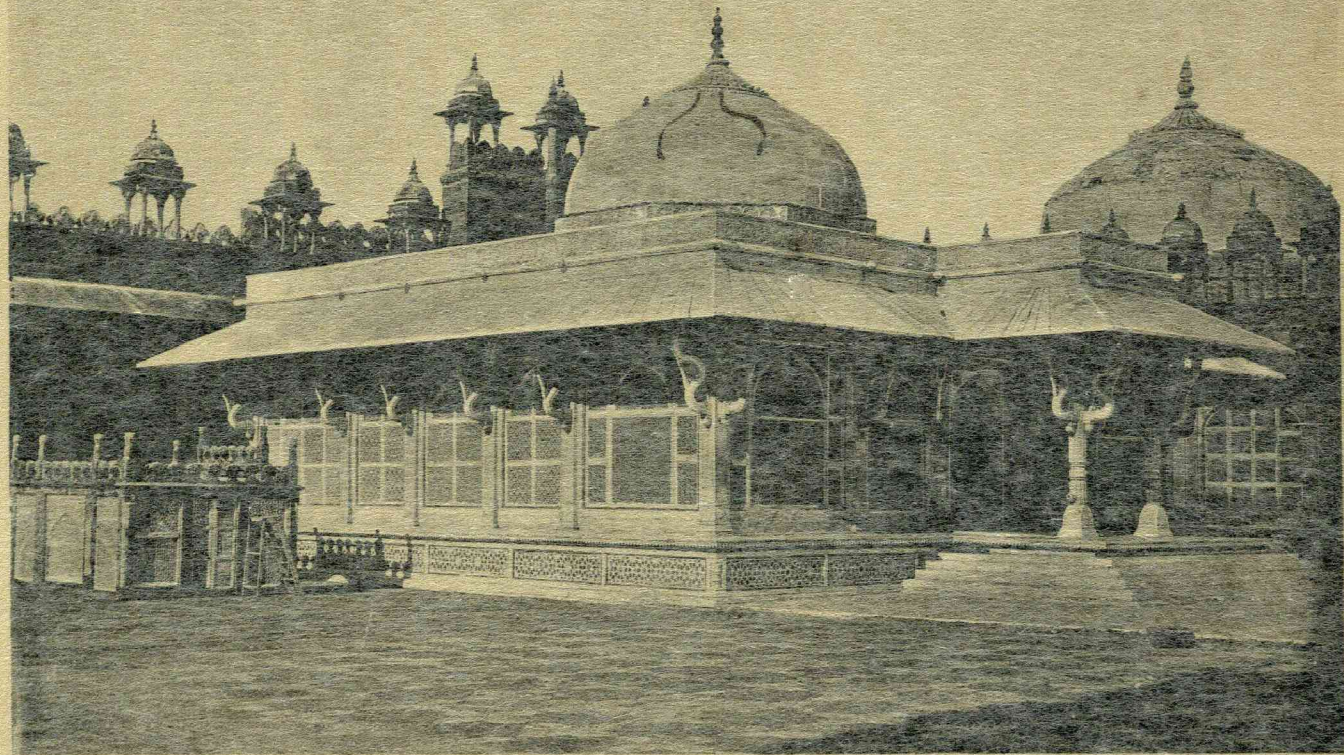
\*Tod, *Rājasthān* (1914 edn.) I, 265. The story of the siege of Chitor is related in Chapter X of the same work.



third, Daniyāl, in September 1572, both of different mothers. Akbar was convinced by this that Sikri was an auspicious spot, and he determined to take up his residence there. He built a noble mosque and tomb for the saint, and gradually surrounded it with buildings, public and private, for himself and his court. Akbar worked with his usual volcanic energy at this new scheme under his personal direction. Palaces, halls of audience, gardens and baths, sprang up as if by magic. A great lake six miles long provided the water, and the city was surrounded by a battlemented wall of red sandstone.

Akbar could never remain inactive for very long. As soon as the building of this new city was well in hand, his restless mind turned to fresh schemes of conquest. One of his "happy sayings" recorded by his faithful servant, Abul Fazl, is to the effect that a monarch should "ever be intent on conquest, otherwise his enemies rise in arms against him." To the west lay the fertile province of Gujarāt, a tempting prey owing to internal dissensions, and particularly valuable because it would give him a much-needed access to the sea. It had originally been part of the Sultanate of Delhi, and had been annexed for a short time by Humāyūn. Akbar set out for Gujarāt in July 1572. He occupied Ahmadābād without difficulty and the Sultan Muzaffar Shāh surrendered to him. He then marched southwards to Cambay, where he saw the sea for the first time, and encountered the Portuguese, the hereditary enemies of the Sultans of Gujarāt, and was greatly impressed by their ships and merchandise, their artillery, and their religious observances. He concluded an agreement with the Portuguese commander, whereby the pilgrim ships going to Mecca should not be molested. He then proceeded to lay siege to the fortified town of Surat at the north of the Tapti and captured it in due course. The commandant, who had formerly been in the service of Humāyūn, had his tongue torn out. Among Akbar's opponents in Gujarāt were his cousins, the Mirzas, who raised a considerable force to contest his intrusion into what they considered to be their domains. In an encounter with these troops, Akbar, who had rashly ridden ahead of his troops with his personal staff, was attacked in a narrow lane, and had to cut his way out in a hand to hand encounter.









Akbar returned to Sikri in 1573 and had resumed the interrupted work of building and adorning his new capital when news arrived that Gujarāt was in rebellion, and the Governor whom he had left in Ahmadābād was being besieged. It was August; the rivers were in flood, and the Mirzas had thought that no one could cross the deadly Rājputāna Desert, the 'Abode of Death', at the height of the hot season. But they had reckoned without their host. Akbar, with 3,000 picked cavalrymen, at once set out, and performed the almost incredible feat of covering the whole distance, nearly 600 miles, in eleven days. The first tidings which the rebels had of his approach was the sound of his trumpets, blown to reassure the beleaguered force. Before they had recovered, Akbar charged them furiously at the head of his men and completely routed them. It is said that the enemy were so panic-stricken that the Moguls plucked the arrows out of their quivers on their backs as they fled, and used them against their owners. Forty-three days from his departure, Akbar re-entered Sikri in triumph, after the most brilliant of his campaigns. In honour of it he named the new city Fathpur Sikri, or Sikri the City of Victory, and erected that magnificent triumphal arch, the Buland Darawāza, or Lofty Portal. In 1601, after the conquest of the Deccan, he adorned it with its famous inscription:

Jesus, Son of Mary (on whom be peace) said: *The World is a bridge: pass over it, but build no house upon it.* Who hopes for an hour, hopes for Eternity. The world is an hour: spend it in prayer, for what follows is unseen.\*

In 1574 Akbar completed the conquest of Northern India by the annexation of Bengal. The young Afghan ruler, Dāud by name, refused to acknowledge the Mogul Emperor as his suzerain; but Akbar moved to Bengal by river in the height of the rainy season, when fighting was generally at a standstill. Dāud was taken completely by surprise: the important town of Patna was captured, and in 1576 he was defeated and killed.

The year 1576 was the turning point in Akbar's life. He was

\*It is not known why Akbar attributes this saying to Jesus, but he was strongly influenced by Christianity at this time. It has been traced to old Muslim sources, and occurs on a royal tomb at Burhānpur in Khāndesh.



now thirty-four, and the master of the whole of northern India from the Indus to the mouth of the Ganges, and from the Himālayas to the Vindhya mountains. His campaigning days were behind him; henceforth he devoted himself to the government of his dominions, leaving the command of his armies to his generals. His first object was the organisation of the vast empire which he had so amazingly acquired. The system introduced by Akbar, and elaborated with the help of his able Hindu Minister, Rājā Todar Mal, was bureaucratic. At the head of the State was the Emperor, who ruled by Divine Right, and was only morally bound by the precepts of the Koran. He was assisted by the Vakīl or Prime Minister, the Diwān or Finance Minister, the Bakshi or Paymaster and the Sadr, who controlled religious and ecclesiastical affairs. The Empire was divided into twelve Subas or Provinces, later increased to fifteen, each of which was ruled by a great noble or member of the Royal Family, the Subadar or Governor, who maintained a court at his provincial capital, modelled on the Imperial Court at Agra or Delhi. Each Suba was divided into districts, and the districts again into smaller units for administrative purposes. The executive officials were known as Mansabdars or Commanders, and were classified upon a military scale, according to the number of horsemen that they were supposed to provide for the use of the government. At one end were the commanders of 10,000, at the other commanders of ten. About seventy per cent of Akbar's officials were foreigners, that is, members of families who had originally accompanied Bābur or Humāyūn from beyond the border; the remainder were Hindus or Indian Muhammadans. During the whole of his reign, twenty-one Hindus held Mansabs of 5,000 and over, and thirty-seven lower appointments. Most of these were Rājput̃s. Akbar discouraged the granting of jāgīrs or fiefs to officers by way of payment, as this weakened the central authority and made the holders too independent; it also led to corruption and oppression. Higher officials received their salaries from the Imperial Treasury every month and were highly paid, but a mansabdar had to provide out of his salary the number of horsemen required by government, and strenuous efforts were made, by means of muster rolls and branding of horses, to prevent evasions of this obligation. Even then a



Commander of 1,000' drew 5,000 rupees a month. The purchasing power of money being about six times what it is to-day, this is roughly the equivalent of thrice the salary of a Lieutenant-Governor under British rule. It is small wonder that these magnificent prizes drew to the Imperial Court the ablest and most ambitious men from all over Asia. All the higher appointments were made by the Emperor himself.\*

In the villages the headman was responsible for the maintenance of Law and Order; in cities this devolved upon an officer named the Kotwal, who had to undertake the most multifarious duties, such as the water supply, sanitation and lighting of the town, the maintenance of roads, the supervision of the markets, the arrest of thieves and the recovery of stolen property. In country districts, an official named the Faujdar was in charge of the policing of the highways and the protection of travellers from robbers. Criminal cases, such as dacoity, murder and rebellion were tried by the executive officers. Torture could be employed to extract evidence, and, as in contemporary Europe, punishments were summary and barbarous and designed to inflict terror on evil doers. They included impalement, dragging to death at the feet of elephants and amputation of limbs. Civil cases were decided by the Kāzi, who was the repository of Muhammadan Law; there was no written code. Akbar was anxious that all should receive justice. "If I were guilty of an unjust act," he said, "I would rise up in judgment against myself," but it is doubtful whether the central government had any effective control over what happened in distant provinces, and the corruptness of the Kāzi was proverbial. All persons, however, had the right of personal appeal, irrespective of rank, to the Emperor himself. The system of revenue collection was organised by Todar Mal upon the lines laid down by Sher Shāh. In India the bulk of the revenue has always come from the soil. Akbar claimed as 'the King's Share' one third of the average annual yield over a period of ten years. The historian Badaoni, describing the new systems, tells us: "In the year 982 (A.D. 1575) an order was promulgated for improving the cultivation of the country and the condition of the peasants. All the parganas (districts) were to be measured, and every space

\*W. H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar* (1923), Chapter III.





of land which under cultivation would produce a crore of tankas (250,000 rupees) was to be divided off and placed under an officer called the Krori, selected for his trustworthiness, so that in three years all uncultivated land might be brought into cultivation and the Treasury replenished."

Badaoni, who, as an orthodox Mussalman of the old school, had no sympathy with these new-fangled ideas for the protection of the peasant from his masters, complains, rather comically, that dishonest officials were brought to account by Rājā Todar Mal, "and many a good man died from severe beatings and the torture of rack and pincers." Other sources of revenue were the salt-tax, excise and customs dues, and the total amount raised annually has been estimated as equivalent to about 38 millions sterling. Much of it was expended upon the Imperial Court, with its enormous retinue which followed the Emperor wherever he went, the salaries of the nobles, the sumptuous buildings erected at the capitals and the army. There was a small but prosperous middle class composed of officials and merchants, the latter residing chiefly in the ports on the West Coast which were beginning to drive a lucrative trade with the European nations. Artists and skilled artisans found ready employment; unskilled labour, on the other hand, was poorly paid, and much of the menial work was performed by slaves. The majority of the people lived, as they do now, in the innumerable villages scattered over the face of the land; the standard of living was low and their wants were few. They were no doubt happier and more contented under Akbar than at any time since the Muhammadan conquest. Amongst the many improvements introduced by Akbar was an excellent system of coinage, which for purity of metal, fullness of weight and artistic workmanship excelled anything in the West. It is probably no exaggeration to say that the Mogul Empire at the beginning of the 17th century was the best organised and most prosperous in the world.

In May 1578 Akbar had another of those strange spiritual crises which had first come to him as a boy of fourteen in the Punjab. A Royal Hunt had been organised at Nandāna, on the banks of the Jhelum river. These battues were carried out on an enormous scale; the army turned out to act as





beaters, and the birds and beasts within a circumference of fifty miles were enclosed in an ever contracting ring, to be slaughtered by the members of the Court. Akbar was sitting under a tree waiting for the driven game, when suddenly a "strange and strong frenzy came upon the Emperor." He gave orders for the hunt to be discontinued forthwith; "not the feather of a finch was to be touched." After his return to Fathpur Sikri he appeared to be a changed man, and began to ponder deeply upon religious matters. "He spent whole nights meditating upon God and modes of addressing Him. Reverence for the Great Giver filled his heart, and in gratitude he would sit many a morning alone in prayer and mortification upon the stone bench of an old cell in a lonely spot near the palace." He sought the company of Shaikh Mubārak, a learned theologian of extremely unorthodox views who had been at various times a Sunni, a Shiah, a Mahdist (one who believes in the approach of the millenium) and a Sūfi. The Shaikh's two sons, Abul Fazl and Faizi, were his constant associates. The former, 'the King's Jonathan,' to use the picturesque phrase of the Jesuits, became his confidential secretary and adviser; according to orthodox Muhammadans these two led the King's mind from God and His Prophet. Abul Fazl was the most learned man of his age and the author of that vast encyclopedic work, the *Ain-i-Akbari* or Institutes of Akbar, which took seven years to compile and is our chief authority for the events of the reign and the organisation of the Empire. To assist him in his quest for the truth, Akbar arranged every Thursday a series of religious debates, which were held in the Ibādat Khāna or Hall of Worship, specially built for the purpose, and often lasted till dawn. At first these were confined to Muslim theologians, but their narrow bigotry disgusted the Emperor, and he began to invite outsiders, Brahmins, Jains and Zoroastrians. "From early childhood," says Abul Fazl, "he had passed through the most diverse phases of religious practices and beliefs and had collected with a peculiar talent in selection all books that can teach, and thus there gradually grew in his mind the conviction that there were sensible men in all religions, and austere thinkers and men with miraculous gifts in all nations. If some truth were thus found everywhere, why should Truth be restricted to one



religion or to a comparatively new creed like Islam, scarcely a thousand years old?" Akbar's beliefs at this stage are finely expressed in a verse written by Abul Fazl:

O God, in every temple I see those who seek Thee.  
And in every tongue that is spoken, Thou art praised.  
Polytheism and Islam grope after Thee.  
Each religion says, 'Thou art One, without equal'.  
Be it mosque, men murmur holy prayers; or church,  
The bells ring for the love of Thee.  
Awhile I frequent the Christian cloister, anon the mosque,  
But Thee only I seek from fane to fane.  
Thine elect know naught of heresy or orthodoxy, whereof  
Neither stands behind the screen of Thy truth.  
Heresy to the heretic; dogma to the orthodox;  
But the dust of the rose-petal belongs to the heart of the  
perfume-seller.\*

Akbar was doubtless prompted by a mixture of motives, religious and political. Besides his impatience at the narrowness of orthodox Muhammadanism there was a desire to find a formula which would satisfy men of all various creeds in his Empire and bring them together. As he said himself, "Although I am master of so vast a kingdom, yet, since true greatness consists in doing the will of God, my mind is not at ease in this diversity of sects and creeds, and apart from the outward pomp of circumstance, with what satisfaction in my despondency can I undertake the sway of Empire?" His contemporary, Elizabeth of England, was making a somewhat similar effort. In 1579, in order to invest himself with the power to make religious reforms, he compelled the theologians to subscribe to an Infallibility Degree which he drew up with the assistance of Shaikh Mubārak. It ran as follows:—

"We declare that the King of Islām, Amīr of the Faithful, Shadow of God in the World—Abul-fath Jalāl-ud-dīn Muhammad Akbar Pādshāh Ghāzi—whose Kingdom God perpetuate!—is a

\*That is, we should extract the essence from all creeds, as the perfume-seller extracts the essence from the rose.





most just, a most wise, and a most God-fearing king. Should, therefore, in future, a religious question come up, regarding which the opinions of the *mujtahids* (theologians) are at variance, and His Majesty, in his penetrating understanding and clear vision, be inclined to adopt, for the benefit of the nation, and as a political expedient, any of the conflicting opinions existing on that point, and issue a decree to that effect, we do thereby agree that such decree shall be binding on us and on the whole nation. Further, we declare that should His Majesty think fit to issue a new order, we and the nation shall likewise be bound by it, provided that such order be not only in accordance with some verse of the Koran, but also of real benefit to the nation; and further that any opposition on the part of his subjects to such an order passed by His Majesty shall involve damnation in the world to come, and loss of property and religious privileges in this."

In June of the same year, in his new capacity of Head of the Church, he ascended the pulpit of the Mosque at Sikri, and recited the Bidding Prayer composed for him by the poet Faizi:—

The Lord to me the Kingdom gave;  
He made me prudent, strong and brave;  
He guided me with right and ruth,  
Filling my heart with love of truth.  
No tongue of man can sum His State,  
*Allahu Akbar!* God is great!

It is said that he was so overcome by emotion that he was unable to finish the words. As time went on, Akbar became more and more hostile to orthodox Muhammadanism. He stopped the use of the name of the Prophet in public worship, and began to adopt Parsee and Hindu religious customs. He ordered Sanskrit religious books to be translated into Persian, and appeared with a Hindu sectarian mark on his forehead. He prostrated himself before the Sun and the Sacred Fire. He forbade the slaughter of animals for food, and proclaimed universal toleration in a country where the persecution of Hinduism had been the rule for centuries. His own words were: "Men fancy that outward profession to the mere letter of Islam, without a heartfelt conviction, can profit them. I have forced many Hindus by fear of my power



to adopt the religion of my ancestors, but now that my mind had been enlightened by the beams of Truth, I have become convinced that in this distressful place of contrarieties where the dark clouds of conceit and the mists of self-opinion have gathered round you, not a step can be made without the torch of proof. That belief can only be beneficial which we select with clear judgment. To repeat the words of the Creed, to perform circumcision, or to lie prostrate on the ground from dread of kingly power is not seeking God:

Obedience is not in prostration on the dust;

Practise Truth, for sincerity is not borne on the brow."

Abkar, however, was still unsatisfied. He had on more than one occasion come into contact with Christians, and he wondered whether he would not find in Christianity the ideal religion for which he sought. He therefore despatched an envoy to the Viceroy of Goa, requesting him to send to the Court "two learned priests who should bring with them the chief books of the Law and the Gospel, for I wish to study and learn the law and what is best and most perfect in it."\* In response to this invitation three Jesuit Fathers, Ridolfo Aquaviva, Anthony Monserrate and Francis Henrique went to Sikri. The latter was a Persian convert and acted as interpreter. After a long and arduous journey, the mission reached Fathpur Sikri at the end of February 1580 and was kindly received. The Fathers made an excellent impression. They were learned and pious men, and shone in the religious debates which the Emperor so greatly enjoyed. Abul Fazl gives a graphic description of one of these debates which ended in the complete discomfiture of the mullahs:

"One night the Hall of Worship was brightened by the presence of Padre Ridolfo, unrivalled among Christian doctors for intellect and wisdom. Several carping and bigoted men attacked him, and this afforded an opportunity for display of the calm judgment and justice of the assembly. These men brought forward the old received assertions and did not attempt to arrive at the truth by reasoning. Their statements were torn to pieces and they were nearly put to shame; and then they began to attack the contradictions in the Gospel, but they could not silence their

\*Sir E. Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul* (1932).





ponent by proving their assertions. With perfect calmness and earnest conviction, the Padre replied to their arguments, and then said: 'If these men have such an opinion of our Book, and if they believe the Koran to be the true Word of God, then let a fire be lighted and let us with the Gospel in our hand, and the *ulama* with their Holy Book in theirs, walk into that testing-place of Truth, and the right will be manifest.' The black-hearted, mean-spirited disputants shrank from this proposal, and answered only with angry words."

For a time the efforts of the Fathers to convert the Emperor and his court seemed about to be crowned with success. The Padres were allowed to build a chapel; they translated the Gospel into Persian, and Akbar attended Mass, and was even disappointed that he was not given Communion. He wore a medallion bearing effigies of the Virgin and the Agnus Dei, and visited the Crib erected at Christmas. He walked in public with his arm round Father Ridolfo's neck, and appointed Father Monserrate as Prince Murād's tutor. But Akbar gradually lost interest in this, as in his other religious experiments. He had the profoundest admiration for the teaching and person of Jesus Christ ('He had the Spirit of God, and neither man nor Angel spoke as He spake'), but he found in the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation insurmountable stumbling-blocks, and for political reasons he refused even to entertain the idea of disbanding his harem. Reluctantly the Fathers came to the conclusion that "the Emperor is not a Muhammadan, but is doubtful as to all forms of faith and holds firmly that there is no divinely accredited form of faith, because he finds in all something to offend his reason and intelligence, for he thinks everything can be grasped by reason."

Akbar's heretical views, and the favour shown to the "Padres," aroused wide-spread alarm in Muhammadan circles. A dangerous rebellion broke out in Bengal in 1581, and a movement was afoot to call in from Kābul Muhammad Hakim, another son of Humāyūn, who held strictly orthodox views. Akbar suppressed the trouble in Bengal with great severity, and publicly hanged one of his Ministers, Shāh Mansur, for complicity in the conspiracy. He then led an expedition to Kābul. Father Monserrate accompanied him, and gives a vivid picture of the Imperial Army in the field. It





was like a moving town; an immense number of followers and attendants accompanied it, and wherever a halt was made, the camp was laid out in an orderly fashion, the Imperial Headquarters being marked by a light on a lofty pole at night. There were bazaars in which food and other commodities could be purchased at fixed rates, and hunts on a large scale took place on the line of march. The expedition reached Kābul by way of Lahore and the Khyber, and returned to Sikri after a bloodless campaign. On the way Father Monserrate had had many religious conversations with Akbar, as the result of which the Fathers finally decided that further efforts were useless, and they returned to Goa in 1582. Akbar parted with them with real grief. They never met again. Father Aquaviva received the crown of martyrdom at the hands of a Hindu mob in 1583; Father Monserrate was captured by the Arabs and sent to the galleys but survived to die at Goa in 1600. Other Jesuit missions visited the Court in this and the succeeding reign, but more in the capacity of informal ambassadors, and were a regular feature until the expulsion of the Order from Portuguese territory in 1759. But under Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb their privileges were greatly curtailed; the latter ruler looked on them with suspicion owing to their friendliness with the rebel, Dārā Shikoh.

After the departure of the first Jesuit mission, Akbar proceeded to promulgate a new creed of his own, which he termed the Divine Faith (Dīn Ilāhī). Its inauguration was marked by the commencement of a new era.\* The details are obscure, but it is described by Abul Fazl as an eclectic creed, 'with the great advantage of not losing what is good in one religion while gaining whatever is better in the other. In that way honour would be rendered to God; peace would be given to the peoples and security to the Empire.' Its observances were to a great extent borrowed from the Jains and Hindus. Cows were to be regarded as sacred, and worship was paid to the Sun. There appears to have been an inner circle of disciples at the Court, who prostrated themselves before Akbar as their Pontiff, received a secret pass-word, abstained from meat, shaved their beards, and practised other mystic

\*The date of the commencement of the *Ilāhī era* is February 19th, 1556. It was discontinued by Shāh Jahān.





observances. The Divine Faith, however, made few converts, and dissolved at the death of its founder.

In 1585, there arrived at Fathpur, almost unnoticed, three Englishmen named William Leedes, Ralph Fitch and John Newbery, bearing a letter from Queen Elizabeth, in which she requested that they might be 'honestly intreated and received,' and granted 'liberty and security of voyage,' in order to start trading operations 'by which means the mutual and friendly trafique of merchandise on both sides may come.' They were the survivors of a party of four which had set out for the East on the ship *Tyger* two years previously. Disembarking at Tripolis, they had made their way to Aleppo: had there joined a caravan which took them to Bagdad. From Bagdad they went on to Ormuz, where they were arrested and sent to Goa as suspected heretics. They escaped the attention of the Inquisition by 'behaving themselves very catholikly and devout, everie day hearing Mass with beades in their hands,' but they were put on parole. One of their number married and settled in Goa; the others broke their parole, and finally found their way to Agra, which was 'much greater than London and very populous.' In the bazaars were 'a great resort of merchandise from Persia and out of India, and very much merchandise of silk and cloth and of precious stones, both rubies, diamonds and pearls.' All the way along the road from Agra to Sikri was 'a market of victuals and other things, as full as though a man were still in a town, and so many people as if a man were in a market.' They had an interview with the Emperor, who was attired in 'a white *cabie* (or tunic), made like a shirt tied with strings on one side, and a little cloth on his head, coloured often times with red and yellow,' but apparently Elizabeth's letter received no reply. Leedes obtained a post as a jeweller at the Court, and Newbery resolved to return home by the overland route through Lahore. Here they disappear from the page of history. Fitch, however, after travelling down the Ganges to its mouth and visiting Bassein, Pegu and Malacca, managed to make his way home by way of Ceylon, Ormuz and Aleppo. He reached England after an absence of eight years, and his report of his experiences led to the foundation of the East India Company.

In 1588, Akbar was compelled by menacing conditions of



affairs in the North West to leave Fathpur Sikri and take up his abode at Lahore. He never returned save for a brief visit in 1601, and the beautiful city became a deserted ruin. From Lahore he despatched forces which undertook the reduction of Sind and Kashmir; Baluchistan and Kandahār were also annexed, and in the far east his armies overran Orissa. But these years were saddened by domestic tragedies. The wise and witty Birbal, his constant companion, was killed on the frontier, and Bhagwan Dās and Todar Mal both passed away. His sons were a constant source of anxiety: Murād and Daniyāl had taken to drink, of which the former died in 1599 and the latter in 1604; Salīm, his favourite, was wayward and idle. In 1593, Akbar, whose ambitions only increased as his conquests extended, resolved upon the annexation of the Deccan. This was a most unfortunate decision, and ultimately led to the ruin of the Mogul Empire. The natural boundary of Hindustan is the Vindhya range, and any additions beyond this point were bound to be a source of weakness rather than of strength. In 1593, however, an excuse was found to intervene in the affairs of Ahmadnagar and an army was sent under Prince Murād. But the city was stoutly defended by the heroic Chānd Bibī, and Murād was unsuccessful. On his death in 1599, Abul Fazl took command, and Chānd Bibī having been murdered, Ahmadnagar was taken in 1600. Meanwhile Akbar had captured the strong fortress of Asīrgarh by bribery and had annexed Khāndesh, but his triumph was marred by the outbreak of a terrible famine, with which the resources of the administration were quite unable to cope. A worse blow was to come. His son Salīm started a rebellion against his father during his absence, and had the incredible baseness to arrange for the great minister, Abul Fazl, to be ambushed and murdered on his return journey from the Deccan in 1602.

Akbar did not long survive the death of his oldest friend and the shock of Salīm's base ingratitude. He fell ill with dysentery and passed away at Agra, October 27th, 1605. His body was hastily interred, with little pomp or ceremony, in a noble mausoleum of his own devising, at Sikandra. "Thus," writes one of the Jesuit onlookers, "does the world treat those from whom no good is to be hoped, and no evil feared." Even so, he was not allowed to





sleep in peace. In 1691 a band of rebellious Jāt peasants plundered his tomb and scattered his remains to the four winds.

Two portraits of Akbar have come down to us from contemporaries. One is from the pen of his old friend, Father Monserrate:

“One could easily recognise even at the first glance that he is King. He has broad shoulders, somewhat bandy legs well-suited for horsemanship, and a light brown complexion. He carries his head bent towards the right shoulder. His forehead is broad and open, his eyes so bright and flashing that they seem like a sea shimmering in the sunlight. His eyelashes are very long. His eyebrows are not strongly marked. His nose is straight and small though not insignificant. His nostrils are widely open as though in derision. Between the left nostril and the upper lip there is a mole. He shaves his beard but wears a moustache. He limps in his left leg though he has never received an injury there. His body is exceedingly well built and is neither too thin nor too stout. He is sturdy, hearty and robust. When he laughs his face becomes almost distorted. His expression is tranquil, serene and open, full also of dignity, and when he is angry awful majesty.”\*

The other is by his son Salīm, afterwards the Emperor Jahāngīr:

“My father always associated with the learned of every creed and religion: especially the Pundits and the learned of India, and, although he was illiterate, so much became clear to him through constant intercourse with the learned and the wise, in his conversations with them, that no one knew him to be illiterate, and he was so well acquainted with the niceties of verse and prose compositions that his deficiency was not thought of. In his august personal appearance he was of middle height, but inclining to be tall; he was of the hue of wheat; his eyes and eyebrows were black, and his complexion rather dark than fair; he was lion-bodied with a broad chest, and his hands and arms long. On the left side of his nose he had

\*Monserrate's *Commentary*, trans. J. S. Hoyland (1922), pp. 196-7.



a fleshy mole, very agreeable in appearance, of the size of half a pea. Those skilled in the science of physiognomy considered this mole a sign of great prosperity and exceeding good fortune. His august voice was very loud, and in speaking and explaining, had a peculiar richness. In his actions and movements he was not like the people of the world, and the Glory of God manifested itself in him. Notwithstanding his Kingship, his treasures and his buried wealth past computation, his fighting elephants and Arab horses, he never by a hair's breadth placed his foot beyond the base of humility before the Throne of God, and never for one moment forgot Him. He associated with the good of every race and creed and persuasion, and was gracious to all in accordance with their condition and understanding. He passed his nights in wakefulness, and slept little in the day; the length of his sleep during a whole night and day was not more than a watch and a half. He counted his wakefulness at night as so much added to his life. His courage and boldness were such that he could mount raging, rutting elephants, and subdue to obedience murderous elephants which would not allow their own females near them. Of the austerities practised by my revered father one was not eating the flesh of animals. During three months of the year he ate meat, and for the remaining nine, contented himself with Sūfi food and was in no way pleased with the slaughter of animals. On many days and in many months this was forbidden to the people.”\*

Akbar lived in an age of great monarchs. His contemporaries were Elizabeth of England, Henry IV of France and Shāh Abbās of Persia, but he towers head and shoulders above them all. He was no pacifist. His ambition was to create for himself a mighty empire, and he carried out his purpose ruthlessly. Terrible in his wrath, he inflicted punishments on those who opposed him which shock modern humanitarian sentiment. But he was not a mere conqueror. The justification of imperialism is that the conquered benefit by the exchange, and Akbar at once set himself to establish throughout his kingdom the rule of justice and law, to ascertain

\*Jahāngīr's *Memoirs*, trans. Rogers and Beveridge, pp. 33-4.





that the peasant was fairly taxed, and that all men should receive a fair hearing and a fair trial. The greatness of his work is shown by the fact that his administrative system is the basis of that which is in vogue in India to-day. His sayings, preserved by Abul Fazl, testify to his earnest desire to do what was right, and his recognition of the enormous responsibilities of his position. "If I could but find anyone capable of governing the kingdom, I should at once place this burden on his shoulders and withdraw therefrom." He was the first of his race to be inspired with the visions of a united India, where everyone, Mussalman, Brahmin and Jain, Christian and Parsee, could live side by side on terms of perfect equality before the law. His enforcement of religious toleration at the time when the rack and the stake were the accepted weapons of religious controversy in Europe places him centuries in advance of his age. At the same time, he did his best to repress barbarous customs practised in the name of religion, such as child-marriage, Sutte and animal sacrifices. "Formerly I persecuted men in conformity with my faith," he said, "and deemed it Islam. As I grew in knowledge, I was overwhelmed with shame. What constancy is to be expected from proselytes on compulsion? . . ." "If men walk in the way of God's will, interference with them would be in itself reprehensible: if otherwise, they are under the malady of ignorance and deserve my compassion. . . ." "Miracles occur in the temples of every creed. . . ." "Each person according to his condition gives the Supreme Being a name, but in reality to name the Unknowable is vain."

Akbar was a man of violent passions, and he had the craving for strong drink and opium, which was a family failing; but he subdued his body by an iron self-discipline, amounting almost to asceticism. He was a fond parent and a great lover of little children. "Children are the young saplings in the garden of life; to love them is to turn our minds to the Bountiful Creator," is one of his most beautiful sayings. In his manner he was every inch a king, 'great with the great, and lowly with the lowly.' Specially characteristic of the man were his flashing eyes, 'vibrant like the sea in sunshine,' as one of the Jesuit Fathers notes. It is difficult to write without hyperbole of this great and very human monarch, one of the noblest, surely, in all history.





## LEADING DATES

- A.D. 1556 Second battle of Pānīpat, accession of Akbar.  
1560 Akbar assumes full powers.  
1565 Abolition of the poll-tax.  
1567-8 Siege of Chitor.  
1569 Building of Fathpur Sikri.  
1572-3 War in Gujarāt.  
1574 Abul Fazl comes to Court.  
1574-6 Wars in Rājputāna and Bengal.  
1579 Akbar Head of the Church.  
1580 Arrival of the Jesuit Mission.  
1585 Akbar shifts his capital to Lahore.  
1586-90 Conquest of Kashmir and Sind.  
1591-1600 Wars in the Deccan. Conquest of Ahmadnagar and death of Chānd Bibi.  
1601 Capture of Asīrgarh.  
1602 Rebellion of Prince Salīm and murder of Abul Fazl.  
1605 Death of Akbar.



*Chapter XVIII*

## THE CLIMAX OF THE MOGUL EMPIRE

ON the death of Akbar, Prince Salīm was enthroned at Agra on October 24th, 1605, with the title of Jahāngīr or World Grasper. He was thirty-eight years of age, and had four sons, Khusru, Parvīz, Khurram and Shahriyār. Jahāngīr on his accession tried to win over popular sentiment by promising a number of reforms, the principal ones being the protection of the Muhammadan religion, the abolition of barbarous punishments such as mutilation, the suppression of highway robbery, the confirmation of the nobles and of religious bodies in their estates, the prohibition of the sale of intoxicating liquors, the provision of public hospitals, and a general amnesty for political prisoners. It is doubtful, however, whether these promises were ever kept; they certainly did not prevent a rising in favour of Khusru, the Emperor's eldest son, who was a popular hero. Khusru possessed a singularly attractive personality. Terry, the chaplain of Sir Thomas Roe, the English Ambassador, describes him as "a gentleman of a very lovely presence and fine carriage, exceedingly beloved of the common people. . . . He was a man who contented himself with one wife, which with all love and care accompanied him in all his streights, and therefore he never would take any wife but herself, though the liberty of religion did admit of plurality." Roe is equally admiring. He speaks of Khusru as "favouring learning, valour and the discipline of war, abhorring all covetousness, and discerning the base customs of taking used by his ancestors and the nobility." Khusru fled to the Punjab and raised the standard of rebellion, but the governor of Lahore refused to open the gates to him. His army, which was composed of raw levies, was easily dispersed, and he was defeated and captured. Jahāngīr stamped out the rising with revolting barbarity. Two of the prince's chief supporters were sewn up in raw hides which contracted on exposure to the sun. Arjun, the Sikh pontiff who had blessed the undertaking, was seized and put to death. Three hundred rebels were impaled on stakes on either side of the road,



and Khusru, trembling and weeping and loaded with chains, was paraded on an elephant, between the lines of writhing victims and forced to witness their death agonies. He was then blinded with a hot iron, but did not lose his sight entirely. Till his murder in 1622, he was a state prisoner. He was buried in a garden at Allahābād, and was popularly regarded as a martyr.

At the beginning of his reign, Jahāngīr, in cynical disregard for his promises to protect Muhammadanism, began to renew his father's favours to the Jesuits. Catholic processions were constantly seen in the streets of Agra, and Christian pictures were hung on the palace walls. Religious discussions were resumed, in which the name of the Prophet was openly reviled. At one time it was even thought probable that the Emperor would be received into the Catholic Church, and this caused a great scandal among Muhammadans of all classes. But early in 1609, there arrived in Agra an English captain of the name of William Hawkins, who had been sent by the newly formed East India Company in order to try and obtain permission to set up a trading factory at the port of Surat. Hawkins had learnt to speak Turkish while in the Levant; the mother-tongue of the Emperor was Turki, and for this reason they were able to converse without an interpreter. Hawkins became the Emperor's boon companion, and was admitted to his drinking-bouts, which often lasted till far into the night. Hawkins gives a vivid picture of Jahāngīr's private life:—

“First in the morning about the break of day he is at his beads with his face turned to the westward. The manner of his praying when he is in Agra is in a private fair room, upon a goodly jet stone, having only a Persian lamb-skin under him; having also some eight chains of beads, every one containing four hundred. At the upper end of this jet stone the pictures of Our Lady and Christ are placed, graven in stone; so he turneth over his beads and saith 3,200 words, according to the number of his beads, and then his prayer is ended. After he hath done, he showeth himself to the people, receiving their salaams or good-morrows; unto whom multitudes resort every morning for this purpose. This done, he sleepeth two hours more, and then dineth, and passeth his time with his women;





and at noon he showeth himself to the people again, sitting till three of the clock, viewing and seeing his pastimes and sports made by men and fighting of many sorts of beasts, every day sundry kinds of pastimes.

“Then at three of the clock all the nobles in general (that be in Agra and are well), resort unto the Court, the King coming forth in open audience, sitting in his seat royal, and every man standing in this degree before him, his chiefest sort of nobles standing within the red rail, and the rest without. They are all placed by his lieutenant-general. This red rail is three steps higher than the place where the rest stand; and within this red rail I was placed, amongst the chiefest of them all. The rest are placed by officers, and they likewise be within another very spacious place railed; and without that rail stand all sorts of horsemen and soldiers that belong unto his captains and all other comers. At these rails there are many doors kept by many porters, who have white rods to keep men in order. In the midst of the place, right before the King, standeth one of his sheriffs, together with the master hangman, who is accompanied by forty hangmen, wearing on their heads a certain quilted cap different from all others, with a hatchet on their shoulders; and others with all sorts of whips being there ready to do what the King commandeth. The King heareth all causes in this place and stayeth some two hours every day.

“Then he departeth towards his private place of prayer; his prayer being ended, four or five sorts of very well dressed and roasted meats are brought him, of which as he pleaseth he eateth a bit to stay his stomach, drinking once of his strong drink. Then he cometh forth into a private room, where none can come but such as himself nominateth (for two years I was one of his attendants there). In this place he drinketh other three cupfuls, which is the portion that the physicians allot him. This done, he eateth opium, and then he ariseth, and being in the height of his drink, he layeth him down to sleep, every man departing to his own home. And after he hath slept two hours they awake him and bring his supper to him; at which time he is not able to feed himself; but it is





thrust into his mouth by others; and this is about one of the clock; and then he sleepeth the rest of the night.”\*

Hawkins rose into high favour, and was made a “commander of 400” with a salary equivalent to £3,000 a year in English money. This deeply alarmed the Jesuits, who, as he says, became ‘like madde dogges,’ and tried to poison him, but Jahāngīr gave him an Armenian girl from the royal harem as his wife, to cook his food and look after him. After two and half years at Court, Hawkins fell into disfavour; Jahāngīr grew tired of him, and he took ship for England in 1612, but died within sight of home. From this time, Portuguese influence at the Mogul Court steadily declined. They lost a great deal of prestige when an attack on some English merchantmen lying in the roadstead off the mouth of the Tapti was repulsed with loss in full view of the native population, and they made the mistake of capturing and holding to ransom a pilgrim ship bound for Mecca, in violation of treaties on the subject.

In 1611, Jahāngīr married a lady of the name of Mihr-un-Nisa, on whom he bestowed the title of Nūr Jahān, or Light of the World. The story resembles that of David and Bathsheba. Nūr Jahān was originally the wife of a Persian nobleman named Ali Kuli Beg, who had been given an estate in Bengal by Akbar. Apparently Akbar made this arrangement to get her away from the Court, as his son was already in love with her. Be this as it may, in 1607 Jahāngīr sent a force to arrest Ali Kuli Beg, who was killed in the scuffle which ensued. His widow was brought to Agra, but was not united to her royal lover until four years later. She was then thirty-four, an age when Oriental women are usually long past their prime, but she was a person of singular beauty and intelligence. With her she brought her father, who received the title of Itimād-ud-daulah, her brother Āsaf Khān, and a host of relatives, whom she installed in high offices. She married her daughter to Prince Shahriyār. She was a fearless horsewoman and an excellent shot, and on one occasion, as Jahāngīr notes in his *Memoirs*, she killed four tigers in quick succession. She sat in the Hall of Audience and received petitions; coins were

\*W. Foster, *Early Travellers in India* (Oxford 1921), p. 114-5.





added in her name and she put her signature beside her husband's on the royal *firmans*. Jahāngīr, now sodden with drink and opium, was completely under her influence. He candidly admits that 'Nūr Jahān was wise enough to conduct the business of state, while he only wanted a bottle of wine and a piece of meat to make merry.' Nūr Jahān used her power well. She was 'an asylum to all sufferers,' helped needy suppliants, and provided dowries for hundreds of orphan Muslim girls. But for her, the government might well have collapsed altogether. The older nobles, though intensely jealous, were afraid to interfere.

In 1615, an ambassador from James I of England arrived at Agra, in the person of Sir Thomas Roe. Roe was a man of great dignity, and very different from the low-born and uproarious Hawkins. His diary of his Embassy is a most valuable document, and is supplemented by an amusing narrative written by his chaplain, Edward Terry.\* Roe's account of his reception gives an interesting description of the daily routine of the Court:—

"JAN. 10. I went to Court at 4 in the evening to the Durbar, which is the place where the Mogul sits out daily to entertain strangers, to receive petitions, to give commands, to see and to be seen. To digress a little from my reception and to declare the customs of the Court will enlighten the future discourse. The King hath no man but eunuchs that comes within the lodgings or retiring rooms of his house. His women watch within and guard him with manly weapons. They do justice one upon another for offences. He comes every morning to a window called the *Jharokha* (Window of Audience) looking into a plain before his gate, and shows himself to the common people. At noon he returns thither and sits some hours to see the fight of elephants and wild beasts; under him within a rail attend the men of rank; from whence he retires to sleep among his women. At afternoon he returns to the Durbar before mentioned. At eight after supper he comes down to the *Ghuzlkhana* (private apartments),

\*Roe's *Embassy* has been edited by Sir W. Foster, Hakluyt Society, 1899. Terry's *Voyage to East India* is in the same authority's *Early Travellers in India*, p. 388 ff.



a fair court where in the midst is a throne erected of freestone, wherein he sits, but sometimes below in a chair; to which are none admitted but of great quality, and few of those without leave; where he discourses of all matters with great affability. There is no business done with him concerning the state, government, disposition of war or peace, but at one of these two last places, where it is publicly pronounced and resolved and so registered, which if it were worth the curiosity might be seen for two shillings, but the common base people know as much as the council, and the news every day is the King's new resolutions tossed and censured by every rascal. This course is unchangeable, except sickness or drink prevent it; which must be known, for as all his subjects are slaves, so is he in a kind of reciprocal bondage, for he is tied to observe these hours and customs so precisely that if he were unseen one day, and no sufficient reason rendered, the people would mutiny; two days no reason can excuse, but that he must consent to open his doors and be seen by some to satisfy others. On Tuesday at the *Jharokha* he sits in judgment, never refusing the poorest man's complaint, where he hears with patience both parts; and sometimes sees with too much delight in blood the execution done by his elephants.

"At the Durbar I was led right before him at the entrance of an outer rail, where met me two principal noble slaves to conduct me nearer. I had required before my going leave to use the customs of my country, which was freely granted, so that I would perform them punctually. When I entered within the first rail I made an obeisance; entering in the inward rail another; and when I came under the King a third. The place is a great court, whither resort all sorts of people. The King sits in a little gallery overhead; ambassadors, the great men, and strangers of quality within the inmost rail under him, raised from the ground, covered with canopies of velvet and silk, under foot laid with good carpets; the meaner men representing gentry within the first rail, the people without in a base court, but so that all may see the King. This sitting out hath so much affinity with a theatre—





the manner of the King in his gallery, the great men lifted on a stage as actors; the vulgar below gazing on—that an easy description will inform of the place and fashion.”

Roe was not greatly impressed by what he saw. Jahāngīr's drunken orgies disgusted him. He “never imagined that a Prince so famed would live so meanly.” The Hall of Audience was richly decorated, “but of so divers pieces and so unsuitable that it was rather patched than glorious, as if it seemed to strive to show all, like a lady that with her plate set on a cupboard her embroidered slippers.”

Roe returned home in 1619, having obtained substantial trading concessions. The English now established a regular factory at the port of Surat, in a building hired from the local governor. It was organised on the collegiate model usually followed in similar establishments in Europe and the Near East: the members were controlled by a president, attended daily chapel, and dined together at mid-day. Discipline was strictly maintained. The English factors lived in considerable pomp and state, but life between the departure and arrival of the annual trading fleets was dull and lonely. The climate was unhealthy and they were entirely cut off from the world, at the mercy of corrupt and rapacious local officials. Now almost the sole extant relic of the cradle of British rule at Surat is the graveyard, where the early factors sleep beneath gigantic piles of masonry, erected apparently in rivalry of the tombs of the Mogul noblemen. These grotesque monuments were greatly admired in their day. The chief exports were printed cotton goods, silk, indigo, spices of all sorts, saltpetre, sugar and opium. Against these, the East India Company's ships imported European broadcloths, velvets and brocades, clocks and mechanical toys, metals such as copper, zinc, lead and quicksilver, and bullion. There was a great demand for English clothes, pictures, jewelry and other luxuries at the Imperial Court.\*

From the point of view of conquest, the reign of Jahāngīr was inglorious, as he was too indolent to take the field. But his generals forced the Rānā of Mewār to conclude an honourable peace;

\*H. G. Rawlinson, *British Beginnings in Western India* (1920), Chapter IX.





they subdued Ahmadnagar in the Deccan, and the strong fortress of Kāngra on the Himalayan border. On the other hand, the Persian armies of Shāh Abbās succeeded in taking the important town of Kandahār, which they held until 1638, when the gates were opened by its treacherous governor.

Jahāngīr's closing years were distracted by disturbances and rebellions on the part of his sons, whom he was too feeble to control. In 1622, Prince Khurram, an orthodox and bigoted Muhammadan, obtained the custody of his unfortunate brother, the half-blind Khusru, and had him strangled. He then openly rebelled, but being defeated, retired to Bengal and the Deccan for the remainder of his father's reign. In 1626, Mahābat Khān, one of the great nobles, made an abortive attempt to seize the person of the Emperor and the Empress. In the following year, Jahāngīr died on his way to Kashmir, and was buried in a magnificent mausoleum at Shāhdāra, on the banks of the Rāvi river near Lahore. (Plate XIX.)

Jahāngīr's character, says Terry, was "composed of extremes; for sometimes he was barbarously cruel, and at other times he seemed to be exceeding fair and gentle." He was a very accomplished man. His Memoirs are written in elegant Persian. He inherited his father's admiration of music, poetry and the fine arts. He was a connoisseur of painting. He erected a number of sumptuous buildings, and he had a genuine love of nature. He went into raptures over the scenery of Kashmir, and writes with real feeling of the birds and flowers he observed there.

"Its pleasant meads and enchanting cascades are beyond all description. There are running streams and fountains beyond count. Wherever the eye reaches, there are verdure and running water. The red rose, the violet and the narcissus grow of themselves; in the fields, there are all kinds of flowers and all sorts of sweet-scented herbs more than can be calculated. In the soul-enchanting spring the hills and plains are filled with blossoms; the gates, the walls, the courts, the roofs, are lighted up by the torches of the banquet-adorning tulips. What shall we say of these things or the wide meadows and the fragrant trefoil?









"The garden-nymphs were brilliant,  
Their cheeks shone like lamps;  
There were fragrant buds on their stems,  
Like dark amulets on the arms of the beloved;  
The wakeful, ode-rehearsing nightingales  
Whetted the desires of wine-drinkers;  
At each fountain the duck dipped his beak  
Like golden scissors cutting silk;  
There were flower-carpets and fresh rosebuds,  
The wind fanned the lamps of the roses,  
The violet braided her locks,  
The buds tied a knot in the heart."\*

Jahāngīr's religious views are difficult to ascertain. They were probably those of his father. In early life he showed a passing interest in Christianity. At other times he shocked the Court by his eccentric display of affection towards a dirty and ragged Hindu ascetic. He shared Akbar's views about the sanctity of animal life, and in 1618, when his grandson Shūja was seriously ill, he made a vow to give up hunting if the child were spared. On the other hand, he inflicted the most atrocious punishments, such as impalement and flaying alive and having men torn to pieces by elephants, and loved to gloat over his victim's sufferings. He killed a clumsy huntsman who spoilt his shot at a wild bull, and when men were seriously injured at elephant fights, they were thrown into the river without compunction, as useless for further service. He was weak, indolent, capricious, and easily led. In later life he fell more and more under the influence of alcohol until at the end he was little more than a confirmed drunkard, incapable of any kind of exertion or public transaction.

On the death of Jahāngīr, disputes for the succession immediately broke out. There were two candidates: Prince Khurram, the elder son, to whom his father had given the title of Shāh Jahān, 'King of the World,' and Shahriyār, the younger, a worthless fellow, but married to the daughter of the dowager Empress Nūr Jahān by her first husband. Shāh Jahān on the other hand was married

\* *Memoirs*, trans. Rogers and Beveridge (Royal Asiatic Society, 1914), II, 114.



to Mumtāz Mahāl, the 'Ornament of the Palace,' daughter of the Empress's brother, Āsaf Khān. Brother and sister at once started intriguing to annex the throne for their respective sons-in-law. Shāh Jahān was far away in the Deccan at the time, but Āsaf Khān sent express messengers to recall him; meanwhile he defeated Shahriyār, threw him into prison and blinded him. Shāh Jahān on his return ordered the whole of his male relations to be put away, and all perished except one, who found asylum in Persia. Nūr Jahān was banished from the court with a handsome allowance. Revolts which broke out in Bundelkhand and the Deccan were easily stamped out, and Shāh Jahān was proclaimed Emperor at Agra in 1628. In 1631, the Empress Mumtāz Mahāl, to whom he had been married for nearly twenty years, died in childbirth. She had been the mother of fourteen out of his sixteen children. Mogul princes, despite polygamy, were usually devoted husbands. Shāh Jahān was prostrated with grief and never married again. The body of Mumtāz Mahāl was taken to Agra for burial, and the sorrowing Emperor erected over her tomb one of the most beautiful monuments in the world, the famous Taj Mahāl, where they now sleep side by side.

Despite his Rājput mother, Shāh Jahān shared none of his father's and grandfather's liberal views on religion. He was no doubt influenced by the Empress, who was a devout Muslim. Sir Thomas Roe speaks of him as "earnest in his superstitions, a hater of all Christians, proud, subtle, false, and barbarously tyrannous." In 1632, he issued an order that all Hindu temples, recently erected or in course of erection, were to be razed to the ground. In Benares alone, seventy-two were destroyed, and no doubt local governors freely availed themselves of the opportunity in other places. The Jesuits were too firmly established to be expelled, but Christian churches at Agra and Lahore were demolished.

In the same year, a pretext was found to attack the flourishing Portuguese settlement at Hugli, about thirty miles from the present city of Calcutta. The Portuguese were accused of kidnapping the inhabitants, infecting them with Nazarene doctrines, and shipping them as slaves to Europe; but the real reason for their unpopularity was the fact that they were monopolising the





sea-borne trade of Bengal. Hugli was a large, open town, surrounded by nothing more formidable than a moat, and its regular garrison consisted of only three hundred European regular soldiers and seven hundred trained natives; yet such was the military reputation of the Portuguese, that an army of 150,000 was sent against it. The siege lasted for three months, but in the end the moat was drained and the flimsy defences were mined. The inhabitants tried to slip away down-stream, but a ship containing 2,000 women and children was sunk, and a mere remnant reached Saugor island at the mouth of the Ganges, only to die of fever and starvation. Of the remainder, 10,000 were 'blown up with powder, drowned in water or burnt by fire,' and 4,000 were taken as captives to Agra, where they were treated with abominable cruelty in order to force them to embrace Islam. But only a handful, terrified at the prospect of being trampled to death by elephants, accepted release on these terms; the remainder, in the words of the official historian, 'passed from prison to hell.' The traveller Bernier says that the misery they endured was unparalleled in modern times. Women, children and priests suffered alike; boys became pages in the Imperial household, and the younger women went to the harems. The Jesuit Fathers and others did their utmost to alleviate the miseries of these poor people, but without much effect.\*

In 1630, Shāh Jahān had resumed his grandfather's plans for the reduction of the Deccan. The territory of Bijāpur was ravaged, and Fath Khān, the treacherous minister of Ahmadnagar, who had taken possession of the person of the last Sultan, opened the gates of the city to the enemy. The Sultan was sent off as a prisoner to Gwalior,† and the State of Ahmadnagar ceased to exist. (1632). One of the features of the operations against Ahmadnagar was the guerilla campaign carried on by Shāhjī, the father of the famous Marāthā chieftain Sivājī. From 1631 to 1635, Shāh Jahān was detained by pressing affairs at the capital, but in 1635 he returned to the Deccan. The Sultan of Golkonda humbly submitted, but the Sultan of Bijāpur was less complaisant. After fierce fighting,

\*F. Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (1914 edn.), p. 177.

†The stronghold of Gwalior, now the capital of H. H. Mahārājā Sindia in Central India, was used by the Moguls as their state prison.





he was forced to submit and pay a fine of twenty lakhs of rupees. The Deccan was divided into four provinces, and put under the charge of Prince Aurangzeb as viceroy. Aurangzeb held charge of the Deccan from 1636 to 1644, when he was recalled for operations on the North-West Frontier. In 1653 he returned to the Deccan and found the country stricken with famine and in a deplorable state of disorder. He endeavoured to put matters upon a better financial basis with the assistance of his able minister Murshid Kuli Khān, who introduced the land-revenue system of Todar Mal. Aurangzeb, who was an orthodox Sunni by religion, hated the Shiah Sultans of Bijāpur and Golkonda and seized every opportunity for attacking them. In this he was aided by an able but unscrupulous soldier of fortune named Mir Jumla. Mir Jumla was originally in the service of the state of Golkonda. He had the unique advantage of possessing a park of artillery served by European gunners, and was always willing to sell his services to the highest bidder. Fortunately for them, the kingdoms of the Deccan received a respite of thirty years owing to the illness of Shāh Jahān in 1657 and the War of Succession which ensued.

In the north-west, the Imperial armies were less successful. An attempt in 1647 to annex the ancestral possessions of Bābur, Badakhshān and Balkh, ended in failure. In 1649 the Persians once more captured Kandahār, the great fortress commanding the Central Asia trade-routes, which had long been a bone of contention. Prince Aurangzeb was ordered to re-take it, but three attempts to do so, commanded first by himself, and then by Dārā Shikoh, in 1649, 1652 and 1653, failed disastrously; the Moguls were notoriously inefficient in siege operations. An immense amount of revenue was expended on these campaigns.

Shāh Jahān had four sons—Dārā Shikoh,\* his father's favourite, who was viceroy of the Punjab and usually remained at the capital; Shūjā, viceroy of Bengal and Orissa; Aurangzeb, viceroy of the Deccan; and Murād Baksh, viceroy of Gujarāt. Each of the sons was virtually an independent ruler, with vast estates, revenues and armies. In 1657 Shāh Jahān's health began to fail. He no

\*This was his title, and means 'equal in splendour to Darius.' His name was Muhammad.





Shikoh appeared at the palace window to give public audience, and the brothers immediately began to take steps to seize the throne. The contest really resolved itself into a duel between Dārā Shikoh and Aurangzeb, the other two being mere pawns in the game. The protagonists were in striking contrast. Dārā Shikoh was an amiable and enlightened man, and almost universally popular. Manucci, the Italian traveller, who had been in his service, describes him as a person of "dignified manners, a comely countenance, joyous and polite in conversation, ready and gracious of speech, of most extraordinary liberality, kindly and compassionate, but over-confident in his opinion of himself."\* He shared the broad religious views of his great-grandfather, was on excellent terms with the Rājput princes and the Jesuit Fathers, and was deeply interested in Hinduism. He had a Persian translation made of the Upanishads, which he declared to be a revelation far older than the Koran. In his wife, Nādira Begum, 'his nearest and dearest friend,' he had a devoted and worthy helpmate. Had he succeeded to the throne, the subsequent history of the Mogul Empire would have been very different. Aurangzeb, on the other hand, was cold and crafty, and an unscrupulous intriguer. A bigoted Sunni, he detested his brother as a heretic, and left nothing undone to compass his destruction. "There is only one of my brothers I fear, the Prayer-monger," Dārā Shikoh is reported to have remarked. He first of all won over the foolish and trusting Murād Baksh with lavish promises, and the two brothers advanced upon Agra. Dārā Shikoh went to meet him with a force composed principally of Rājput levies. After a skirmish near Ujjain, battle was joined at Samugarh, outside Agra, on May 29th, 1658. The Rājputs fought gallantly, and for a time the issue was in doubt, but when Dārā Shikoh got down from his elephant to mount his war horse in order to lead a charge in person, a cry went up that he was dead, and his army broke in panic. Aurangzeb entered Agra on June 8th, and annexed the vast sums of money in the vaults of the

\*Nicolao Manucci, the Venetian, landed at Surat and took service as an artilleryman under Dārā Shikoh. After this he served under Rājā Jaisingh. He lived for a time in Bandra near Bombay and Goa, and then settled in Madras, where he died in 1717. His *Storia do Mogor* has been translated by W. Irvine under the title of *A Pepys of Mogul India* (London, 1908).



Imperial Treasury. The old Emperor was made a captive in the fort, where he remained until his death in 1666, tended by his faithful daughter Jahānāra, and gazing, it is said, upon the distant view of his fairest creation, the Tāj Mahāl, where he was laid to rest beside his beloved consort.

Meanwhile, Aurangzeb was busy disposing of his rivals. The unfortunate Murād Baksh received an unexpected reward for his co-operation. He was invited to a banquet and arrested while under the influence of drink. He was sent to Gwalior, where he was executed for having put to death a Muhammadan in Gujarāt. Aurangzeb preferred to rid himself of his rivals by legal forms. Meanwhile, Dārā Shikoh was forced to fly to Multān, but at a critical moment Aurangzeb was recalled from the pursuit in order to meet an invasion from Bengal by Shāh Shūja. Shāh Shūjā was defeated and followed up so vigorously that he took refuge in the jungles of Arakan, where, apparently, he and his followers were murdered by the tribesmen. They were never heard of again. Dārā Shikoh in the meantime made his way down the Indus and through Sind and Kāthiāwār to Gujarāt, where he was hospitably received by the governor of Ahmedābād. He might well have escaped to the Deccan, where he would have found a warm welcome, but in an evil day he accepted the overtures of Jaswant Singh of Mārwar. The Rājput, corrupted by Aurangzeb, betrayed his ally, and Dārā was defeated by the Imperial troops near Ājmir (April 14th, 1659). The unhappy prince took to his heels; his followers were deserting him one by one, and the ever-dwindling body of fugitives was attacked and plundered by the Bhils, Kols and other wild tribes. Dārā once more appeared before Ahmadābād; but this time the governor, fearing the vengeance of Aurangzeb, refused to open his gates to him. The French traveller Bernier, who happened by chance to be present, vividly describes the consternation with which the news was received.† Behind the *purdah*, the women could be heard

\*François Bernier, the French physician and traveller, landed at Surat at the end of 1658, and like Manucci, accompanied Dārā Shikoh for a time. He was afterwards with Aurangzeb in Delhi, Lahore and Kashmir. He accompanied another French traveller, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, to Bengal and Golkonda, and returned home in 1668. His *Travels in the Mogul Empire* was published in 1670. The edition here quoted is by V. A. Smith. (Oxford, 1914).





pitifully weeping and wailing, while the unhappy Dārā, despair written on his face, went from man to man, asking even the common soldiers for their advice. The only course left was to escape across the Persian border to safety. It was the height of the summer, and the heat in the Sind desert at that time of the year is almost unbearable. The party became split up, and one day a foot-messenger arrived to say that the faithful Nādira was no more. "She had died of heat and thirst, not being able to find a drop of water in the country to assuage her thirst. The Prince was so affected by the news that he fell as though he were dead." Dārā Shikoh now seems to have become quite indifferent about his fate. He accepted the offer of an Afghan chief named Jiwān Khān to escort him through the Bolān Pass. He had once saved Jiwān Khān from execution, but the ungrateful wretch handed him over to his pursuers. The final act in this unutterably pitiful tragedy is recounted by Bernier:—

"Dārā was now seen seated on a miserable and worn out elephant covered with filth; he no longer wore the necklace of large pearls which distinguished the princes of Hindustan, nor the rich turban and embroidered coat; he and his son were now habited in dirty cloth of the coarsest texture, and his sorry turban was wrapped round with a Kashmir shawl or scarf resembling that worn by the meanest of the people. Such was the appearance of Dārā when led through the bazaars and every quarter of the city. I could not divest myself of the idea that some dreadful execution was about to take place. . . . The crowd assembled upon this disgraceful occasion was immense; and everywhere I observed the people weeping and lamenting the fate of Dārā in the most touching language. I took my station in one of the most conspicuous parts of the city, in the midst of the largest bazaar; I was mounted on a good horse and accompanied by two servants and two intimate friends. From every side I heard piercing and distressing shrieks, for the Indian people have a very tender heart; men, women and children wailing as if some mighty calamity had happened to themselves.

"Aurangzeb was immediately made acquainted with the



impression which this spectacle produced upon the public mind. A second council was consequently convened and the question discussed whether it was more expedient to conduct Dārā to Gwalior, agreeably to the original intention, or to put him to death without further delay. . . . The charge of this atrocious murder was entrusted to a slave of the name of Nazar, who had been educated by Shāh Jahān, but experienced some ill-treatment from Dārā. The Prince, apprehensive that poison would be administered to him, was employed with Sipihr Shukoh in boiling lentils, when Nazar and four other ruffians entered his apartment. 'My dear son,' he cried out, 'these men are come to murder us!' He then seized a small kitchen knife, the only weapon in his possession. One of the murderers having secured Sipihr Shukoh, the rest fell upon Dārā, threw him down and while three of the assassins held him, Nazar decapitated his wretched victim. The head was instantly carried to Aurangzeb, who commanded that it should be placed in a dish and that water should be brought. The blood was then washed from the face, and when it could no longer be doubted that it was indeed the head of Dārā, he shed tears and said, '*Ai badbkht! Ah, wretched man! Let this shocking sight no more offend my eyes; but take away the head and let it be buried in Humāyūn's tomb.*'\*\*

The execution was sanctioned by the obsequious theologians of the Court on the ground that Dārā Shikoh was guilty of heresy. It is some satisfaction to learn that the villain who betrayed him was stoned to death by the enraged populace. Dārā's eldest son, Sulaimān Shikoh, fled to the Rājputs, and was not captured till 1660. He was brought in chains before his uncle and then sent to the state-dungeon at Gwalior, where two years later he died of slow poisoning.† Aurangzeb was now king in all but name. He had rid himself of all his rivals. In justification it may perhaps be said that, had he fallen into the hands of his brothers, his fate would probably have been like theirs.

\* *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 103.

† *Post*, a decoction of opium, was administered to state-prisoners. It had the effect of slowly depriving them of their reason and finally of killing them.



The reign of Shāh Jahān is usually spoken of as the Golden Age of the Mogul Empire. The wealth stored in the strong-rooms of the Imperial Treasury at Agra was enormous, and has been estimated as worth 340 million pounds sterling. Buildings of almost incredible splendour sprang up at Agra, Delhi, Lahore and other places. At Shāh Jahān's new capital at Delhi, the plain red sandstone of Akbar's time was replaced by marble, inlaid with precious stones; ceilings were of solid gold and silver, and the Peacock Throne, encrusted with gems, was alone valued at ten

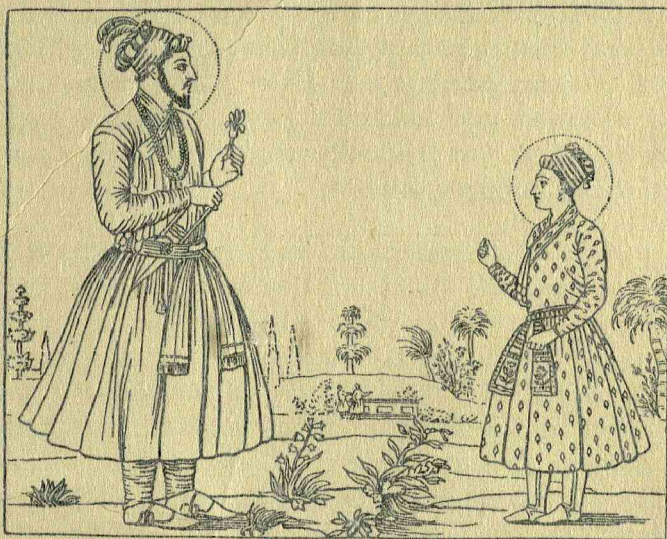


FIG. 41. *Dārā Shikoh and his son Sipih Shikoh.*

(After the drawing in Valentyn's *Beschrijving*.)

millions of rupees. The official historian paints a glowing picture of the state of the Empire under Shāh Jahān:—

“The means employed by the King in these happy times to protect and nourish his people, his knowledge of what made for their welfare, his administration by honest and intelligent officers, the auditing of accounts, his care of the crown lands and their tenants, and encouragement of agriculture and the collection of revenue, together with his punishment and admonition of evil-doers, oppressors, and malcontents, all tended to the prosperity of the empire. The pargana which had brought in three lakhs in Akbar's reign now yielded ten,



though some fell short, and those who increased the revenue by careful agriculture were rewarded, and *vice versa*. The expenditure of former reigns was not a fourth of the cost of this reign, and yet the King quickly amassed a treasure which would have taken years to accumulate under his predecessors. Notwithstanding the extent of the country, plaints were so rare that only one day a week was assigned to the administration of justice, and seldom did even twenty plaintiffs appear on that day, to his Majesty's disappointment. But if offenders were discovered, the local authorities generally tried them on the spot, with right of appeal to the governor or Diwān or Kāzi (Finance Minister and Chief Justice) when the cause was reviewed and judgment given with great care and discrimination, lest it should come to the King's ears that justice had not been done."\*

The panegyrics of obsequious court-annalists are not borne out by the numerous European travellers who now began to visit India in increasing numbers. Their accounts reveal beneath the glittering façade a vast amount of human poverty and misery. In 1630, Gujarāt was visited by a terrible famine, due to the failure of the seasonal rains, which lasted for two years. The most horrifying accounts of this great calamity have come down to us, and there is no reason to suppose that it was an isolated occurrence. "As the famine increased," says the Dutch merchant, Van Twist, "men abandoned towns and villages and wandered helplessly. It was easy to recognise their condition: eyes sunk deep in the head, lips pale and covered with slime, the skin hard, with the bones showing through, the belly nothing but a pouch hanging down empty, knuckles and knee-caps showing prominently. One would cry and howl for hunger, while another lay stretched on the ground dying in misery; wherever you went, you saw nothing but corpses."† Further details are almost too horrifying for repetition. It was impossible to approach the villages owing to the stench of the piled up bodies; whole families drowned themselves in the rivers, and cannibalism was openly practised.

\*S. Lane-Poole, *Medieval India*, p. 110.

†W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb* (1920), p. 212.





It was dangerous for travellers to appear on the roads, which were haunted by bands of desperate men, reduced to savagery.

A pestilence was a natural result of these conditions, and swept away numbers of the survivors. The local administration was helpless. About one and a half lakhs of rupees were spent on relief works, and revenue was remitted: but the real causes of the heavy mortality were over-taxation and the rapacity of the officials, which left the peasant no reserves on which to fall back, and the huge Mogul armies, which absorbed the bulk of the supplies of grain which should have gone to the stricken districts. Bernier says that the *jāgīrdārs* or fief-holds had an almost despotic authority over not only the peasants in their domains, but the merchants and artizans; and nothing could be more cruel and oppressive than the manner in which it was exercised.\* The grandiose building-schemes of the Mogul Emperors included few works of public utility, except a certain number of roads, caravanserais and canals; buildings were often, as in the case of the city of Fathpur Sikri, abandoned after erection, and the country was strewn with these costly and useless monuments of the caprice and extravagance of departed rulers. While they were in progress, the peasants' carts were impressed, and work in the fields was at a standstill. Francisco Pelsart, the chief of the Dutch factory at Agra, gives a vivid picture of the utter subjection and poverty of the common folk. "There are three classes of people who are indeed nominally free, but whose status differs little from voluntary slavery—workmen, peons or servants and shopkeepers. For the workmen there are two scourges: low wages and oppression. Workmen in all crafts, which are very numerous (for a job which one man would do in Holland here passes through four men's hands before it is finished), can earn by working from morning till night only five or six *tackas*, that is four or five stivers†. The second scourge is the oppression of governor, nobles, Diwān, Kotwāl, Bakshi, and other Imperial officers. If one of these wants a workman, the man is not asked whether he is willing to come, but is seized in his house or in the street, well beaten if he should dare to raise any objection, and in the evening paid half

\* *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 225.

† There were twenty-four stivers to the rupee, then valued at 2s. 3d.





his wages, or perhaps nothing at all.”\* Bernier has a similar tale to tell. “The country is ruined by the necessity of defraying the enormous charges required to maintain the splendour of a numerous court, and to pay a large army maintained for the purpose of keeping the people in subjection. No adequate idea can be conveyed of the sufferings of that people. The cudgel and the whip compel them to excessive labour for the benefit of others; and driven to despair by every kind of cruel treatment, their revolt or their flight is only prevented by the presence of a military force.”†

Such, says the leading authority on the subject, was the economic system, which was drawing towards collapse. “Weavers, naked themselves, toiled to clothe others. Peasants, themselves hungry, toiled to feed the towns and cities. India, taken as a unit, parted with useful commodities in exchange for gold and silver, or in other words gave bread for stones. Men and women, living from season to season on the verge of hunger, could be contented as long as the supply of food held out; when it failed, as it so often did, their hope of salvation was the slave-trader, and the alternatives were cannibalism, suicide or starvation. The only way of escape from that system lay through an increase in production, coupled with a rising standard of life, but this road was barred by the administrative methods in vogue, which penalized production and regarded every indication of increased consumption as a signal for fresh extortion.‡

#### LEADING DATES

- A.D. 1605 Coronation of Jahāngir.
- 1606 Rebellion of Khusru.
- 1608-11 William Hawkins at the Imperial Court.
- 1611 Marriage of Jahāngir and Nūr Jahān.
- 1615-18 Embassy of Sir Thos. Roe.
- 1622 Loss of Kandahār.
- 1622-5 Rebellion of Prince Khurram.
- 1627 Death of Jahāngir.
- 1628 Enthronement of Prince Khurram as Shāh Jahān.

\*Quoted in W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p. 199.

†*Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 230.

‡W. H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p. 304-5.





- 1631 Death of the Empress Mumtāz Mahāl.
- 1632 Siege of Hugli. Destruction of Hindu temples. End of Ahmadnagar.
- 1636 Prince Aurangzeb, Viceroy of the Deccan.
- 1638 Kandahār retaken.
- 1639 Foundation of the English settlement of Madras.
- 1649 Second loss of Kandahār.
- 1653 Aurangzeb returns to the Deccan. War against Golkonda and Bijāpur.
- 1657 War of Succession.
- 1666 Death of Shāh Jahān.





## THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE MOGUL EMPIRE

AURANGZEB, having waded through blood to the throne, was proclaimed Emperor in June 1659, with the title of Ālamgir, or Grasper of the Universe. He was now forty, and as viceroy of the Deccan had received a thorough training in the art of government. The first twenty years of his reign were comparatively peaceful. Distant campaigns in Assam and Arakan on the one hand, and against rebellious tribes on the North-West Frontier on the other, were scarcely felt in Hindustan. He began his reign with a number of useful edicts intended to curb rapacity and dishonesty on the part of tax collectors, and to encourage agriculture. At the same time, he received numerous embassies from Persia, Basra, the Sharif of Mecca, the Emperor of Abyssinia, and the Dutch, congratulating him on his accession. The reception of the envoy from Shāh Abbās II of Persia was in particular a scene of great brilliance, and is described by an eye-witness. "Soldiers were posted on both sides of the street, a league in length, through which the ambassador would pass. The principal streets were decorated with rich stuffs, both in the shops and also at the windows, and the ambassador was brought through them, escorted by a number of officers, with music, drums, pipes and trumpets. On his entering the fort or royal palace, he was saluted by all the artillery. . . . It was a fine sight to see the ambassador followed by his 500 horsemen, large-limbed and handsome men with huge moustaches, riding excellent and well-equipped horses". Delhi was assuming the position of the political centre of the Muham-madan world.

Aurangzeb, with grim and fanatical earnestness, now set about his task of purifying the land of vice and wickedness, and restoring it to the pristine purity, piety and simplicity of the early Caliphs. The extravagances of the Court were curtailed; drinking, gambling and other vices were suppressed; musicians, painters and architects no longer enjoyed the royal patronage; and apostates from Islam were arrested and put to death after due trial. A contemporary, writing from the view-point of orthodox





Aurangzādism, vividly describes the Emperor's sweeping reforms:—

“The Emperor, a great worshipper of God by temperament, is noted for his rigid attachment to religion. In his great piety he passes whole nights in the palace mosque and keeps the company of devout men. In privacy he never sits on a throne. Before his accession he gave in alms part of his food and clothing and still devotes to alms the income of some villages near Delhi and of some salt tracts assigned to his privy purse. He keeps fast throughout Ramazān and reads the holy Koran in the assembly of religious men with whom he sits for six or even nine hours of the night. From his youth he abstained from forbidden food and practices, and from his great holiness does nothing that is not pure and lawful. Though at the beginning of his reign he used to hear the exquisite voices of ravishing singers and brilliant instrumental performances, and himself understands music well, yet now for several years past, in his great restraint and self-denial, he entirely abstains from this joyous entertainment. He never wears clothes prohibited by religion, nor uses vessels of silver and gold. No unseemly talk, no word of backbiting or falsehood, is permitted at his Court. He appears twice or thrice daily in his audience chamber with a mild and pleasing countenance, to dispense justice to petitioners, who come in numbers without hindrance and obtain redress. If any of them talks too much or acts improperly he is not displeased and never knits his brows. By hearing their words and watching their gestures he says that he acquires a habit of forbearance and toleration. Under the dictates of anger and passion he never passes sentence of death.”\*

Unfortunately, Aurangzeb did not stop there. He conceived it to be his duty to take active measures to put an end to the religious toleration which had been the keynote of the policy of Akbar and Jahāngir. Shāh Jahān had stopped the building of fresh temples, but in 1669 Aurangzeb issued an order “to demolish all the schools

\*Elliot and Dowson, VII, 15.



and temples of the infidels, and to put down their religious teaching and practices." The Visvānāth temple at Benares was destroyed, and a mosque erected in its place, in the very heart of the most sacred of all Hindu cities. In the following year, the great temple of Keshava Deva at Mathurā, erected in the reign of Jahāngir at the cost of £350,000, was razed to the ground, and the richly-jewelled idols taken to Agra, where they were placed on the threshold of a mosque, to be trodden under foot by true believers. The very name of the town, associated for centuries with the worship of Krishna, was changed to Islāmābād. Thousands of places of worship were thus destroyed, to the consternation of pious Hindus all over India, and special officers were appointed to see that the Emperor's orders were strictly carried out.

Aurangzeb now proceeded to further measures which inflicted great economic hardship upon his Hindu subjects. In 1671 he dismissed the Hindu clerks in his service, but this order had to be partially rescinded, as it was found impossible to carry on the administration without them. An octroi duty of five per cent was levied on goods imported by Hindus, while Muhamadan traders were exempted. But the most impolitic act of all was the re-imposition in 1680 of the poll-tax on unbelievers. This tax was universally unpopular, as it was regarded as a badge of servitude. It is true that certain exceptions were made in the case of government officials and the very poor, but the general results were disastrous, and many Hindus who were unable to pay were forced to turn Muhammadan in order to escape from the insults of the collectors.

The Muhammadan historian Khāfi Khān gives a vivid picture of the consternation among the Hindu population of the capital when the news spread abroad of the renewal of the hated tax. "The Hindus round Delhi assembled in multitudes under the *jharokha* of the Emperor on the river-front of the palace, declaring that they were unable to pay, and praying for the revocation of the edict. But the Emperor would not listen to their complaints. One Sabbath, as he went to prayers at the great mosque, a vast crowd of Hindus thronged from palace to mosque. Every moment the crowd swelled, and his equipage was brought to a standstill. Then the elephants were brought out and charged the mob, and





many people were trodden to death. For days the Hindus went on assembling and complaining, but in the end they had to pay the *jizya*.”\*

An anonymous but nobly-worded protest, sent to Aurangzeb about this time from one of his Hindu feudatories, gives a vivid picture of the outraged feelings of loyal subjects at the treatment to which they were subjected.† The writer points out that under the great Akbar, all sects, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Jains and even atheists lived together in perfect harmony. “The aim of his liberal heart was to cherish and protect all the people.” He and his successors had the power to collect the poll-tax, but refrained because they did not give place to bigotry in their hearts, and considered all men, high and low, to be created alike by God. “Such were the benevolent intentions of your ancestors. Whilst they pursued these great and generous principles, where-soever they directed their steps, conquest and prosperity went before them; and then they reduced many countries and fortresses to their obedience. During your Majesty’s reign, many have been alienated from the Empire, and further loss of territory must necessarily follow, since devastation and rapine now universally follow without restraint. Your subjects are trampled under-foot; every province on your Empire is impoverished; depopulation spreads, and difficulties accumulate. . . . If your Majesty places any faith in those books by distinction called divine, you will be there instructed God is the God of all mankind, not the God of Mussalmans alone. Pagan and Mussalman are alike in His Presence. Distinctions of colour are His ordination. In your mosques, to His name the voice is raised in prayer; in a house of images, when the bell is shaken, still He is the object of adoration. To vilify the religion or customs of other men is to set at naught the pleasure of the Almighty. When we deface a picture we naturally incur the resentment of the painter and justly the poet has said, ‘Presume not to arraign or scrutinise the works of Power Divine.’”

\*Elliot and Dowson, VII, 296.

†The authorship of this letter is disputed. Tod ascribes it to Rānā Rāj Singh, while Sir J. Sarkar has adduced reasons to attribute it to Shivājī the Marāthā, the actual writer being his secretary, Nīl Prabhu Munshi. (*History of Aurangzeb*, Book III, Chap. 34. Appendix.)



Unhappily, this remarkable protest fell upon deaf ears. To Aurangzeb, toleration in any form was an offence against Islam, and soon the Empire was ablaze with rebellion. The Jāt peasantry round Mathurā, enraged at the violation of their temples, killed their governor and plundered Akbar's tomb at Sikandra. They were only put down after a pitched battle in which the Imperial troops lost four thousand men. In 1672 a sect of low-caste Hindus, known as the Satnāmis, started a rising in the Punjab, which was only suppressed after severe fighting. In 1675 Aurangzeb committed the incredible folly of attempting to force Teg Bahādūr, the Sikh Guru, to embrace Islam, and, when he refused, he put him to death with prolonged tortures. But Aurangzeb's most serious blunder was the alienation of the Rājput̄s, whom Akbar had rightly looked upon as the pillars of his Empire. Aurangzeb had no words too bad for the "beast-faced, beast-hearted Rājput̄s, Satans in human form," and an opportunity of humiliating them soon presented itself. In 1678 Mahārājā Jaswant Singh of Mārwar died while serving the Empire on the North West Frontier, and the Emperor had the incredible baseness to annex the state while its defenders were far away fighting his battles. Muslim officials were placed in charge of the administration, the poll-tax was imposed, temples were demolished and idols broken, and the young rājā was taken off to Delhi to be brought up as a Muhammadan noble. From this fate he was rescued by a devoted band of his followers, who carried off his boy and his mother, and cut their way out with their swords. The Imperial troops sent after them were attacked so fiercely that they were forced to abandon the pursuit. Aurangzeb had also given dire offence by demanding a princess of the family for the royal harem, but the Rājput̄ lady expressed her determination to commit suicide rather than yield to the embraces of the "monkey-faced barbarian." The whole of Rājputāna was now in revolt. The rebels were led by the Rānā Rāj Singh of Udaipur, and when Aurangzeb took the field and occupied their principal towns, they fled to the hills and defied him to attack them. Prince Akbar, the Emperor's favourite son, who was left to carry on the war, protested in impassioned language to his father against the suicidal folly of his policy. "Blessings be on this race's fidelity to salt," he





wrote, "who, without hesitation in giving up their lives for their master's sons, have done such deeds of heroism that for three years the Emperor of India, his mighty sons, famous ministers and high grandees have been moving in distraction against them, although this is only the beginning of the contest." When Aurangzeb refused to listen, Prince Akbar joined the enemy, and attempted to seize the throne with the help of his Hindu allies. But the wily Emperor contrived that a letter should fall into the hands of Rājā Durgā Dās, in which it was proposed that the Rājput troops should be placed in the forefront of the battle and left to their fate. He also enticed one of Akbar's ministers, Tahavvur Khān, into his camp and murdered him. The Rājputs, scenting treachery, deserted *en masse*, and Prince Akbar was compelled to flee for his life. He eventually reached the Deccan, where he was hospitably received by the Marāthā chief Sambhājī. When Aurangzeb entered the Deccan in pursuit of him, he escaped to Bombay, and took ship to Persia, where he tried in vain to collect an army to reinstate himself. He died in 1704.

When Prince Akbar fled to the Deccan in 1681, the Emperor determined to put into execution his long deferred plan for the conquest of the South. The continued existence of the heretical states of Bijāpur and Golkonda, in spite of the fact that they had made a formal submission, was a deep offence to him, and he resolved to make an end of them altogether. Another object which he had in view was the reduction of the Marāthās. The history of the Marāthā State will be described in a later chapter; it is sufficient to mention here that the great Sivājī (1627-1680) had broken away from Bijāpur, set up a Hindu state, and had defeated all attempts of the Bijāpur and Mogul armies to bring him to book. Sivājī died in 1680, but his son Sambhājī succeeded him and carried on his father's policy. Prince Muazzam, Aurangzeb's eldest son, protested against the impolicy of destroying Bijāpur and Golkonda, which served as bulwarks against the rising Hindu power, but the Emperor was implacable. The Imperial army moved slowly and ponderously into the Deccan and it did not reach Sholapur, the base of operations, until 1685. Gemelli Careri, an Italian traveller who visited the Emperor in 1695, gives a vivid account of this huge moving city, thirty miles





in circumference, with its 250 bazaars, 500,000 camp followers, merchants and artificers, and 50,000 camels and 30,000 baggage elephants. The royal tents alone, including the accommodation for the harem, covered three square miles of ground, and were defended by palisades and ditches, with guns mounted at regular intervals. Such an unwieldy host was entirely at the mercy of the nimble Marāthās, who were experts at guerilla warfare. "The enemy cut down the grass, which was a cause of distress to man and beast, and they had no food but coconuts and a grain called *kudun*, which acted like poison upon them. Great numbers of men and horses died. Grain was so scarce and dear that wheat flour sometimes could not be obtained for less than three or four rupees. The men who escaped death dragged on a half existence, with crying and groaning as if every breath they drew was their last. There was not a noble who had a horse in his stable fit for use."\*

Foiled in his attempt to subdue the Marāthās, the Emperor withdrew to Ahmadnagar, and in 1685 he advanced to attack Bijāpur. Bijāpur surrendered in October 1686; the young king was made prisoner and died in captivity fifteen years later. This was the end of the great and flourishing city which had been the centre of art and culture in the Deccan for over two centuries. The turn of Golkonda came next. Abdul Hasan, the Sultan, had been guilty of unspeakable abominations. "The evil deeds of this wicked man," writes Aurangzeb,† "pass beyond the bounds of writing. . . . First, placing the reins of authority and government in the hands of vile, tyrannical infidels; oppressing and afflicting *saiyids*, *shaikhs* and other holy men; openly giving himself up to excessive debauchery and depravity; indulging in drunkenness and wickedness night and day; making no distinction between infidelity and Islam, tyranny and justice, depravity and devotion; waging obstinate war in defence of infidels; want of obedience to the Divine commands and prohibitions, especially to that command which forbids assistance to an enemy's country, the disregarding of which had cast a censure upon the Holy Book in the eyes of God and man." The siege of Golkonda was

\*Elliot and Dowson, VII, 314.

†*Ibid.*, p. 325.





opened in January 1687, but the inefficient Mogul artillery made no impression on the walls, and at last Aurangzeb had to have recourse to bribery. The gates were opened, but one gallant officer, Abdur Razzāk, with a handful of men, attacked the Mogul columns as they entered and fought until at last he fell from his horse, with no less than seventy wounds. He was carefully tended by Aurangzeb's surgeons, and eventually entered the Imperial service. The Sultan Abdul Hasan was sent to Daulatābād, where he was placed in honourable confinement. In 1689 Aurangzeb achieved his last success by the capture of the Marāthā Rājā Sambhājī and his family. Sambhājī was offered his freedom if he would embrace Islam, but he derisively refused and, having blasphemed against the Prophet, he was put to death with torture. His son Shāhu was sent to the Court, to be brought up as a Muhammadan nobleman.

In 1690 the tide of Mogul conquest had reached its high-water-mark. The last independent kingdoms of the Deccan had been subdued. Aurangzeb was Emperor of India from Cape Comorin to Kābul, and he would have been wise to return to Delhi, leaving Prince Azam Shāh in the Deccan as viceroy. But, in reality, his triumph was a hollow one. The mighty empire was actually on the verge of collapse. The Deccan campaign was a continual drain upon the Imperial treasury, and the stored-up wealth of Aurangzeb's ancestors was poured out like water in maintaining the huge army in the field. India was far too vast to be governed by a single man, and the Emperor was too suspicious to delegate power to another. He had now been absent for twenty years from his capital, from which he was entirely cut off, and had lost all control over the central government. Corruption and oppression flourished unchecked, and in the Punjab the Sikhs and Jāts were in open revolt. Nor were the Marāthās by any means subdued. Their ranks were swelled by numbers of masterless men and professional soldiers, whom the fall of Bijāpur and Golkonda had left without employment. Led by Rājārām, the younger brother of Sambhājī, they fell back upon Jinji, the almost inaccessible stronghold in the far South. From 1694 to 1698 the Mogul generals tried in vain to take Jinji, and when at last they succeeded, Rājārām and his followers slipped away to carry on the contest. Gemelli Careri's account of his interview





with Aurangzeb in 1695 is full of interest. He found him encamped on the banks of the Kistna river. The old man entered slowly, leaning on a staff; he was in white muslin, with a single enormous emerald in his turban. He received his visitor courteously, and enquired about the reasons which brought him to India and the war then being waged between Turkey and Hungary. Careri says that he was of low stature, with a large nose, slender and stooping with age. The whiteness of his round beard was the more conspicuous over his olive-coloured skin. Careri noticed that, in spite of his advanced age, he was able to read petitions presented to him without spectacles, "and by his cheerful, smiling countenance seemed to be pleased with the employment."\* The never-ending war with the Marāthās dragged on interminably. In 1700 the Imperial army laid siege to Sātārā, the Marāthā capital, and compelled it to surrender, but what the Moguls won one day the Marāthās recovered on the next. In 1704 another European traveller, Niccolao Manucci, visited the royal camp; he gives a pathetic description of the aged Emperor. "Most of the time he sits doubled up, his head drooping. When his officers submit a petition, or make report to him of any occurrence, he raises his head and straightens his back. He gives them such an answer as leaves no opening for reply, and still looks after his army in the minutest particulars. But those who are at a distance pay very little attention to his orders. They make excuses, they raise difficulties: and under cover of these pretexts, and by giving large sums to the officials at Court, they do just what they like. If only he would abandon his mock sainthood and behead a few of those in his Empire, there would not be so much disorder, and he would be better obeyed." In 1705 Aurangzeb was attacked by fever. He was now eighty-eight, and at last the indomitable old man was forced to give the order to retire. He was persuaded to fall back upon Ahmadnagar, from which twenty-four years earlier he had set out so full of hopes of conquest and glory; the rearguards of the retreating army were continually harried by the exultant Marāthās, and it seemed to the weary and dispirited troops as though "not a soul would escape from that land of

\*A Collection of Voyages and Travels, by A. & J. Churchill. (1707-1747), IV, p. 222 ff.





Mountains and raging infidels." For two years Aurangzeb lingered on, clinging desperately to life, but daily becoming weaker. His letters written during this period are full of pathos. To his son Kambaksh he writes:—

"My fears for the camp and followers are great; but alas! I know not myself. My back is bent with weakness, and I have lost the power of motion. The breath which rose has gone and has left not even hope behind it. I have committed numerous crimes and know not with what punishments I may be seized. Though the Protector of Mankind will guard the camp, yet care is incumbent also on the Faithful and on my sons. When I was alive, no care was taken, and now I am gone, the consequences may be guessed. The guardianship of a people is a trust by God committed to my sons. Be cautious that none of the Faithful are slain or that their miseries fall upon my head. . . . The domestics and courtiers, however deceitful, yet must not be ill-treated. It is necessary to gain your views by gentleness and art. The complaints of the unpaid troops are as before. Dārā Shikoh, though of much judgment and good understanding, settled large pensions on the people, but paid them ill, and they were ever discontented. I am going. Whatever good or evil I have done, it was for you. Take not amiss nor remember the offences I have done unto yourself, that account may not be demanded of me hereafter."\*

On February 21st, 1707, after he had finished his prayers and was absorbed in meditation, an attack of faintness came on, but "still the fingers of the dying King continued mechanically to tell the beads of the rosary, and a quarter of the day later he breathed his last." So passed "the crowned saint of Islam." His personal life had been of the simplest; he habitually practised fasting and austerities; at one time he had seriously considered the question of giving up the world and joining an ascetic order. He had devoted himself to the task of purging the land of heresy and idolatry, and his declining years had been passed in the field in

\*Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb* (Calcutta, 1912), V, 259.





an ineffectual crusade against the infidel. It is one of the tragedies of history that all his efforts only led to the ruin of the greatest Empire that India had witnessed.

No gorgeous mausoleum marks the last resting-place of the Great Puritan of India. By his own directions he was wrapped in a shroud of coarse canvas, bought from the proceeds of the sale of caps which he had quilted with his own hand. Three hundred rupees, the proceeds of copies of the Koran which he had himself made, were distributed to the poor, and he was laid in a humble tomb of plastered masonry among the Muslim saints who are buried in the village of Rauza near Daulatābād.

The death of Aurangzeb was followed by the usual scramble for power between the three surviving sons. In the end, Prince Muazzam seized Agra and the Imperial treasury, and was enthroned with the title of Bahādur Shāh. Bahādur Shāh was an elderly man, pious and amiable, but little fitted for the control of affairs of State. He managed, however, to patch up a truce with the Rājput̃s, and tried to conciliate the Marāthās by sending back Rājā Shāhu to govern the Deccan as a feudatory of the Mogul Empire. He had to deal with an insurrection of the Sikhs, under Bāndah, the 'false Guru,' who was captured and executed. Bahādur Shāh died in 1712, and disorders at once broke out in Delhi. The story of the next fifty years is one of the most piteous in all history; anarchy and bloodshed stalked unchecked through the unhappy capital. "Many persons of no party, and followers of the camp, unmindful of what fate had in store for them, were greatly alarmed, and went off to the city with their families. Ruffians and vagabonds began to lay hands on the goods of many. Several persons were to be seen seeking refuge in one little shop. Friends and relations were unable to answer the calls made upon them. Great disturbances arose in the armies of the princes, and none of the great men had any hopes of saving their lives." The streets were filled with mutinous soldiers, clamouring for their pay, and the scene, in the words of the chronicler, "was like the Day of Judgment." The power fell into the hands of two brothers, Abdullah and Husain Ali, known as "The King-Makers," who set up puppet Emperors at their will, and when they had no further use for them, threw them into dungeons,





ended and murdered them. The Empire now began to break up. Asaf Jāh, the Nizām-ul-Mulk, the foremost of the Mogul nobles, disgusted at the degeneracy of the Court, with its buffoons and dancing girls, shook the dust of Delhi from his feet, and went off to the Deccan, where he carved out for himself the great state of Hyderabad. In a similar fashion another great noble, Saādat Khān, the Nawāb Vazīr, set himself up in Oudh, and Allavardi Khān, the Governor of Bengal, also ceased to pay tribute and became virtually independent. The Marāthā horse-men had long overrun the fertile territories of Central India, and in 1737 they appeared before the gates of Delhi; after cutting to pieces a force sent to meet them, they vanished as suddenly as they came. Their mere appearance, however, spread panic in the city. In 1739 a fresh terror arose, Nādir Shāh, one of the mightiest warriors that Persia had produced, proclaimed himself King, and finding the gateway of India unbolted and unguarded, advanced almost unopposed to the capital, brushing aside with ease the wretched levies which tried to bar his path. The Emperor Muhammad Shāh went trembling to meet him; the two rulers entered Delhi side by side and exchanged visits of courtesy and presents. "Strange are the freaks of fortune," writes an Indian historian. "All the resources of the Mogul Emperor and his nobles at the disposal of the Persian Red Caps! The Mogul monarchy seemed to all to be over." All, however, went well until some of the Persian soldiery were murdered in the byeways by the city rabble. Then the order was given for a general massacre. For half a day the slaughter went on, while Nādir Shāh, seated in the Golden Mosque, watched the scene. The gutters ran with blood. "The streets were strewn with corpses like a garden with dead leaves. The city was reduced to ashes and looked like a burnt plain." The Chāndni Chowk, the famous street of the merchants, was gutted. Never since the days of Timūr had Delhi seen such a visitation; the ruin of its beautiful buildings was such that only the labour of years could restore the capital to its former grandeur. At length the Shāh yielded to the piteous entreaties of the Emperor and called off his men. The conquerors then departed, laden with loot of fabulous worth. All the Imperial gold plate and jewels, to the



value of many millions of rupees, elephants, horses, costly stuffs, and, lastly, the famous Peacock Throne itself, were carried off to Persia. Even the wretched inhabitants were held up to ransom, and many committed suicide, rather than face the shame and misery which had befallen them.

The sack of Delhi in 1739 sounded the death-roll of the Mogul Empire, though phantom Emperors continued to occupy the throne, sitting in their ruined halls under tattered canopies. Yet, so powerful was the magic of the name of the Great Mogul, that he was still regarded as almost sacred throughout the country, and rival powers contended for the control over his person. "Notwithstanding His Majesty's total deprivation of real power," writes Arthur Wellesley, "almost every state and every class of people continue to acknowledge his nominal sovereignty. The current coin of every established power is struck in the name of Shāh Ālam. Princes and persons of the highest rank and family still bear the titles and display the insignia of rank which they or their ancestors derived from the throne of Delhi under the acknowledged authority of Shāh Ālam, and His Majesty is still considered to be the only fountain of similar honours. The pride of numerous classes of Mussalmans in India is gratified by a recognition of the nominal authority of the illustrious representative of the House of Timūr over the territories which once constituted the extensive and powerful Empire of the Mogul, and the Mussalmans are still disposed to acknowledge the legitimacy of the pretensions and demands ostensibly proceeding from the authority of the Imperial Mandate."\*

In 1765 Clive wrung from the titular ruler the grant of the Diwāni of Bengal, Bihār and Orissa, that is, the right to collect and administer the revenue of those provinces for the East India Company; later on the Emperor bestowed upon him a similar grant for the 'Northern Circars,' a large district in the north-east of the present Madras Presidency. Shāh Ālam was now residing at Allahābād, virtually a pensioner of the English. Later he returned to Delhi and become the tool of the Marāthās; in 1788 he was seized by a ruffian named Ghulām Kādir, who flogged the royal princesses and blinded the Emperor in an

\*Wellesley's Despatches (ed. M. Martin, 1840), IV, 154-5.





attempt to force him to disclose the whereabouts of his treasures. The Marāthā chieftain, Māhādījī Sindia, seized this unspeakable brute, cut off his hands, nose and ears and sent him in a cage to his victim. In 1804 Lord Lake, after beating the Marāthās outside Delhi, took the poor, blind old man under his protection. In 1827 Lord Amherst insisted on meeting Shāh Ālam's successor as an equal, the Emperor seated on his throne in the Hall of Private Audience, and the Governor General by his side on a chair, but the Imperial titles still appeared on the Company's rupees.

On that fatal Sunday, May 10th, 1857, when the Indian Mutiny broke out, the sepoys from Meerut rushed into Delhi, proclaiming as their leader the Emperor the aged Bahādur Shāh, who was still regarded by millions of pious Muslims as the rightful ruler of India. After the fall of Delhi, Bahādur Shāh was, with doubtful legality, put on trial for rebellion against the East India Company. He was deposed and ended his days as a state-prisoner in Rangoon. Such was the ignominious end of the greatest and most powerful of all the Indian dynasties which had ever occupied the throne of Delhi.

The causes of the downfall of the Mogul Empire are many and complex. The first was that the Moguls were essentially foreigners, and had no roots in the soil. They were aliens both by race and religion from the vast majority of their subjects. The far-sighted attempt of Akbar, the only one of his line with a vision transcending the necessities of the moment, to unite the peoples of India under a truly national government, found no sympathy with the successors. The religious policy of Aurangzeb, which resulted in the alienation of the Rājput, deprived the Empire of its strongest supporters, and provoked widespread risings among the Hindus from the Punjab to the Deccan, while his attempts to check the lax morality and general corruption of the age ended in failure. His simple way of life found no imitators among his officers. The presence of the Emperor at the capital was essential in order to maintain the government; Aurangzeb's absence for a quarter of a century, during which time he was cut off in the inaccessible wilds of the Deccan, was fatal to good government. The incessant wars which broke out on the occasion of each fresh occupant of the throne resulted in the extermination

*whom Akbar  
regarded as  
pillars of the  
empire*





of the old Mogul nobility. New blood from Central Asia no longer flowed into the country, and it is a commonplace that a foreign race rapidly degenerates under tropical conditions unless it is constantly recruited from without. The descendants of the hardy followers of Bābur, who braved snowstorms and mountains on their way to India, had become pale, languid and effeminate persons, clad in voluminous muslin petticoats, who took the field in palanquins, accompanied by hordes of camp-followers, luxurious tents and immense trains of baggage. "Great empires," says Bacon, "do enervate and destroy the forces of the natives which they have subdued, resting upon their own protective forces; and then, when they fail also, all goes to ruin, and they become a prey. . . . When a warlike state grows soft and effeminate, they may be sure of war; for commonly such states are grown rich in the time of their degeneracy, and so the prey inviteth, and their decay in valour encourageth a war."

Another cause of the downfall of the Mogul state was its military weakness. Its vast, unwieldy armies were nothing more than an armed rabble. Bernier compares them to a herd of animals, and says that 25,000 French veterans under Condé or Turenne, could rout them with ease.\* The French, and later the English, discovered that a handful of Indian sepoys, drilled and disciplined in European fashion, could rout an Indian host. At Plassey (June 23rd, 1757), Clive had only 3,000 men, including 950 Europeans. With these he put to flight the huge army of the Nawāb of Bengal, consisting of 50,000 infantry, 18,000 cavalry and fifty-three guns: his own losses amounted to twenty-two killed and forty-nine wounded! The Nawāb's were over five hundred. Against the Marāthās, with their guerilla tactics, the Moguls were equally helpless. Their artillery was crude and badly served; fortresses which later on surrendered in a few days to the English held out indefinitely and could only be reduced by bribery.

Of the economic causes at work—the corruption of the officials, the extravagance of the nobility, the waste of money on costly and useless buildings, and the oppression of the peasantry, which was driving large sections of the country out of cultivation

\* *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 55.



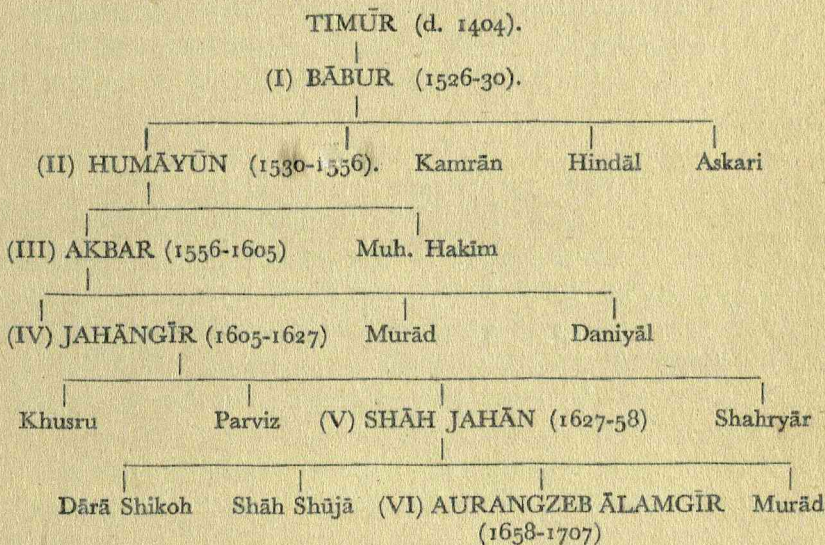


Attention has already been made. The country was torn to pieces by civil wars, and groaned under every species of domestic confusion. Villainy was practised in every form; all law and religion were trodden underfoot; the bonds of private friendship and connections, as well as of society and government, were broken; and every individual, as if amidst a forest of wild beasts, could rely on nothing but the strength of his own arm.\* /

### THE MOGUL EMPERORS

From Bābur to Aurangzeb.

(Principal names only).



### LEADING DATES

- A.D. 1659 Enthronement of Aurangzeb.  
1669 Destruction of Hindu Temples. Jāt Rebellion.  
1672 Satnāmi rebellion.  
1679 Reimposition of the poll-tax.  
1680 Rebellion of Prince Akbar. Rājput war.  
1681 Aurangzeb goes to the Deccan.  
1686 Annexation of Bijāpur.  
1688 Annexation of Golkonda.

\*Alexander Dow, *History of Hindostan* (1778), II, 96.





## INDIA

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- 1706 Retreat of the Imperial Armies from the Deccan.  
1707 Death of Aurangzeb. Accession of Bahādur Shāh.  
1712 Accession of Farrukhsiyar.  
1724 Commencement of the break-up of the Empire. Secession of  
Oudh and the Deccan.  
1739 Sack of Delhi by Nādir Shāh.  
1740 Secession of Bengal.  
1756 Sack of Delhi by Ahmad Shāh Durrāni.  
1804 The Emperor places himself under British protection.  
1857-8 Sepoy Mutiny. Trial and deposition of the last Mogul Emperor.  
Assumption of the Government of India by the Crown.





## MOGUL ART AND CULTURE

WITH the advent of the Moguls, Indian architecture enters upon a new phase, in which the rugged austerity of the work of the earlier sultans is softened and beautified by Persian influence. The chief characteristics of Mogul buildings are the bulbous dome, the cupolas at the corners standing on slender pillars, and the lofty vaulted gateway. Bābur's disgust at the lack of the amenities to which he had been accustomed in his new capital at Agra has already been recorded, and he at once sent for architects from Constantinople and other centres of Islamic culture, and employed large numbers of skilled Indian stonemasons to remedy these defects. Unfortunately, most of Babur's work has been cleared away to make room for later buildings. Mogul architecture, as we know it, for all practical purposes begins with Akbar. Akbar had a passion for building. In the words of Abul Fazl, "His Majesty plans splendid edifices, and dresses the work of his mind and heart in the garment of stone and clay." His earliest erection, the tomb of his father Humāyūn, has many novel characteristics. The main body of the building is of red sandstone, inlaid with marble, and surmounted by the characteristic cupolas. The dome is of white marble. It was clearly a tentative essay in a new style, and Fergusson remarks on the poverty of the general design and the absence of the picturesque boldness of the tombs of the earlier dynasties. The most characteristic product of Akbar's genius is the city of Fathpur Sikri, happily preserved almost intact. The central feature is the great mosque built round the tomb of Salīm Chishti (Plate<sup>F</sup>XVIII). The tomb, which stands in the midst of the courtyard, is of marble inlaid with mother of pearl. The windows contain marble tracery of fine workmanship. The cornice is supported by brackets of elaborate and almost fantastic character, clearly Hindu in style, and the glittering white building, seen in the bright light of an Indian winter morning, contrasts vividly with the red sandstone of the mosque itself. On the south side is the gigantic gateway, the Buland Darawāza, or Lofty Portal, erected to commemorate the conquest of Khāndesh



in 1601. This has been described as the most perfect architectural achievement in the whole of India. The whole edifice has an almost indescribable dignity and impressiveness, and the sandstone has weathered to a beautiful rose colour. There are numerous other public and private buildings in Fathpur Sikri, all of which present features of great interest, but mention can only be made here of the Diwān-i-Khās, or Hall of Private Audience. A single carved column of red sandstone, surmounted by a gigantic capital, stands in the midst of the chamber. From the capital radiate four railed balconies. Akbar, 'like a god in the cup of a lotus flower,' seated himself in the middle, with his ministers at the four corners, while the nobles and others admitted to the audience stood below. This singular erection is a striking illustration of the originality of the Emperor's genius; indeed, as Fergusson justly remarks, the whole city is a romance in stone, such as very few are to be found anywhere; it is a reflex of the mind of the great man who built it, more distinct than can be obtained from any other source. "In the empty palaces, the glorious mosque, the pure white tomb, the baths, the lake, at every turn we realise some memory of the greatest of Indian Emperors. We may even enter his bedroom, the Khwābghar or House of Dreams, and see the very screens of beautiful stone tracery, the same Persian couplets, the identic ornament in gold and ultramarine on which Akbar feasted his eyes in the long sultry afternoons."\* Another characteristic work is Agra Fort, a vast structure of red sandstone, with walls seventy feet high and lofty gateways.

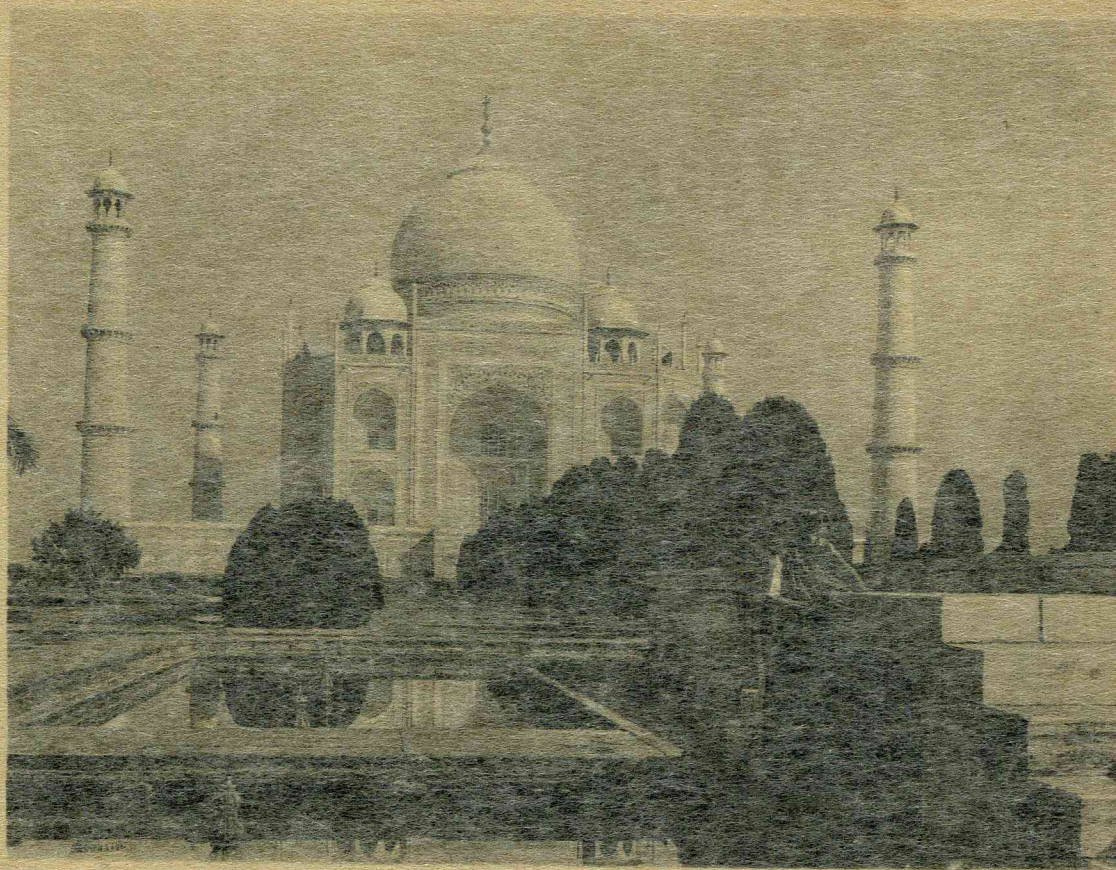
The reign of Jahāngīr was not remarkable for any public buildings on a large scale. The chief architectural remains of this period are Akbar's mausoleum at Sikandra, completed in 1612, and the tomb of Itimād-ud-daulah, the father of the Empress Nūr Jahān, erected in 1628. Akbar's tomb, with its four diminishing storeys or terraces, is a most interesting structure, and was no doubt planned by the great Emperor himself. It has been suggested that the design was a reminiscence, on the part of Hindu craftsmen, of the ancient Buddhist vihāra. Others have maintained that it was the work of Cambodian visitors from the

\*S. Lane-Poole, *Medieval India Under Muhammadan Rule*, p. 271.





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East. At the summit is the 'false tomb,' which consists of a block of solid marble carved with flowers and bearing the formulæ of the Divine Faith, *Allah-u-Akbar*, 'God is Great,' and *Jalli Jalālun*, 'Magnificent in his Glory'. Originally it was intended that it should be covered with a domed marble canopy, 'to be ceiled all within with pure sheet-gold, richly inwrought'. The Emperor's body reposed below, in a high vaulted chamber dimly lighted from above, beneath a white marble sarcophagus. The elegant tomb of Itimād-ud-daulah calls for little comment. It is wholly of white marble, elaborately carved, and is decorated with the dainty *pietra dura* work which is such a feature of the succeeding reign.

Under Shāh Jahān, Mogul architecture reached its climax. Nothing can be more striking than the contrast between the manly simplicity of Akbar's sandstone buildings and the lavishly ornamented and elaborately inlaid marble work of his grandson. It is significant of the decadence which was already about to set in. In Shāh Jahān's buildings, the Hindu influence, so strong under Akbar, entirely disappears. The most famous of all Shāh Jahān's works is the incomparable Tāj Mahāl, begun in 1632, the year after the death of his beloved Empress, and not completed until 1647, though 20,000 workmen were employed on it daily. Its total cost was stated to have been just over 411 lakhs of rupees, or four and a half million pounds sterling; fortunately, perhaps, for the resources of the unhappy and overtaxed peasantry, the Emperor's dream of a replica on the opposite side of the Jumna, linked by a flying bridge, was never realised. An unsupported statement of Father Manrique, that the architect was a Venetian named Jerome Veroneo, may safely be disregarded. The design is purely eastern in conception, and Persian authorities ascribe it to a certain Ustād Isa (Master Jesus), a Turk from Constantinople, who had previously worked in Shirāz and Samarkand. The Tāj Mahāl is a great complex of buildings, surrounded by a massive wall, with mosques on two sides. In the centre the marble mausoleum rises lotus-like from the midst of the formal gardens and fountains which surround it. "At the end of a long terrace, its gracious outline, partly mirrored in the still water of a wide canal, a fairy vision of silver white—like the spirit of purity—seems to rest so lightly,





so tenderly, on the earth, as if in a moment it would soar into the sky".\* At the corners of the raised platform stand, sentinel-like, four lofty minarets. The spandrels and other architectural details are picked out in *pietra dura* work, the stones employed being agate, carnelian, jasper and turquoise. "They are combined in wreathes, scrolls and frets, as exquisite in design as beautiful in colour, and relieved by the pure white marble in which they are laid, they form the most beautiful and precious style of ornament ever adopted in architecture."† Descending, we find ourselves in the room where the royal lovers sleep side by side. "No words can express the chastened beauty of that central chamber, seen in the soft gloom of the subdued light which reaches it through the distant and half-closed openings that surround it." The Tāj Mahāl is, indeed, 'the miracle of miracles, the final wonder of the world' (Plate XX). Of Shāh Jahān's buildings in Agra Fort, the most attractive is the little Pearl Mosque, built of delicately veined marble, and entirely unadorned.

In 1638, Shāh Jahān commenced to build for himself a new capital at Delhi, which he named Shāhjahānābād. The palace is surrounded by a wall of red sandstone. On entering, the visitor finds himself in a vaulted hall like the nave of a gigantic Gothic cathedral. Passing through the Naubat Khānā, or Music Chamber, where the drums announced the approach of the Imperial cortège, he arrives at the Diwān-i-Ām, or Hall of Public Audience. Beyond this lies the Diwān-i-Khās, or Hall of Private Audience. This is a marble pavilion, the fretted pillars richly inlaid with *pietra dura* work. The ceiling was originally of crimson, overlaid with gold and silver foliage, and here the Great Mogul, on his Peacock Throne, gave audience in private to princes of the blood, nobles and foreign ambassadors. On the cornices at either end of this superb chamber is the couplet:—

*Agar firdaus bar ruyi zamin ast,  
Hamin ast, hamin ast, hamin ast!*

If on earth be an Eden of bliss,  
It is this, it is this, it is this!

\*E. B. Havell, *Handbook to Agra and the Taj*, p. 80.

†Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, p. 598.





Behind is a maze of buildings which comprise the private apartments of the Emperor and his seraglio. These rooms included the Painted Chamber (Rang Mahāl), the House of Dreams (Khwābghar), and many others. An outstanding feature of these rooms is the pierced marble screens between them. One doorway, which bears above it the Scales of Justice inlaid in *pietra dura*, is especially famous. It is somewhat of a relief after the dazzling and voluptuous splendours of the palace to turn to Shāh Jahān's two other great buildings, the Jama Masjid or Cathedral Mosque at Delhi, and Jahāngīr's tomb outside Lahore (Plate XIX). The Jama Masjid, intended as a centre of public worship for the populace of the capital, is a dignified and nobly-proportioned structure, admirably suited for its purpose.

The Mogul love of nature has already been commented on; Babūr and his descendants revelled in trees and flowers and landscape-gardening as a favourite diversion. A Muhammadan nobleman was wont to plan for himself a Bārādārī or summerhouse where he could take his ease after the heat of the day, and which would become his resting-place at death. It usually stood in the midst of a formal garden, laid out in geometrical patterns. In a hot, dry country such as India, water is essential, and the garden was well supplied with fountains, artificial cascades, and marble channels and basins. It was planted with shade and fruit trees. But the Mogul garden was not invariably associated with the tomb. Jahāngīr and his consort, the Empress Nūr Jahān, laid out gardens wherever they stayed. Jahāngīr in his *Memoirs* constantly reverts to the subject and records the intense pleasure which he derived from them. The Shālimār, Nishāt and other gardens in Kashmir are perhaps the best examples of the Mogul gardener's art. Above the gate of the Shālimār Garden in Lahore is the famous couplet:

Sweet is this garden, through envy of which the tulip is  
spotted,

The rose of the sun and moon forms its beautiful lamp.

Painting was no novelty in India when Humāyūn brought Persian draughtsmen back with him on his return from exile. The Hindus had long adapted the ancient art of Ajanta to the



illumination of religious manuscripts, and there were flourishing schools of painting in Jammu, Kāngra and Rājputāna. In Rājputāna the artists enjoyed the patronage of the wealthy Hindu princes, and their work, like that of Agra and Delhi, tended to become a Court art. The subjects chosen by these painters are usually mythological; the favourite themes are episodes from the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*, and from the life of Krishna; his amours with the Gopis or Divine Milkmaids afford almost inexhaustible scope for the imagination (Plate XXI). Others were the Hindu musical modes, (*Rāg*), allegorically represented. By appropriating a different mode to each of the seasons, the artists of India connected certain strains with certain ideas. Albums of pictures depicting these went by the name of *Rāgmālā* or 'Garlands of Modes'. Scenes from Hindu daily life—girls worshipping at a shrine, ascetics plunged in meditation under a banyan tree, elephants, cattle and deer—are very common. (Fig. 42). Night scenes, with their startling chiaroscuro effects, were also extremely popular. "In these works, Nature is represented with a simple and decorative directness, expressive of all forms but rigorously excluding the complex and immaterial; an art that is true to nature, to the artist's ideals and to the time and country he lived in; without effort, without falseness and without prevarication."\*

Humāyūn's chief artists were Mīr Sayyid Ali and Khwājā Abdus Samad. Mīr Sayyid Ali was a pupil of the famous Bihzād of Herat, 'the Raphael of the East', and early Mogul art bears pronounced traces of its Persian origin. But with Akbar began the fusion of the Hindu and Persian styles from which Mogul art was evolved. Abul Fazl records Akbar's remarkable dictum on the subject of painting, which was regarded by strictly orthodox Muhammadans as idolatrous. "There are many," he said, "who hate painting, but such men I dislike. It appears to me as if a painter had quite peculiar means of recognising God; for a painter, in sketching anything that has life, and in devising the limbs one after another, must come to feel that he cannot bestow personality upon his work, and is thus forced to thank God, the Giver of Life, and will thus increase his knowledge."† Akbar especially admired

\*L. Heath, *Examples of Indian Art*, p. 16.

†*Ain-i-Akbari*, trans. Blochmann and Jarrett (Calcutta, 1873-1891), I, 107.







Hindu art. "Their pictures," he was wont to say, "surpass our conception of things; few in the whole world are found equal to them." Among the Hindu artists who caught Akbar's attention, one of the most remarkable was Daswānāth. Daswānāth was the

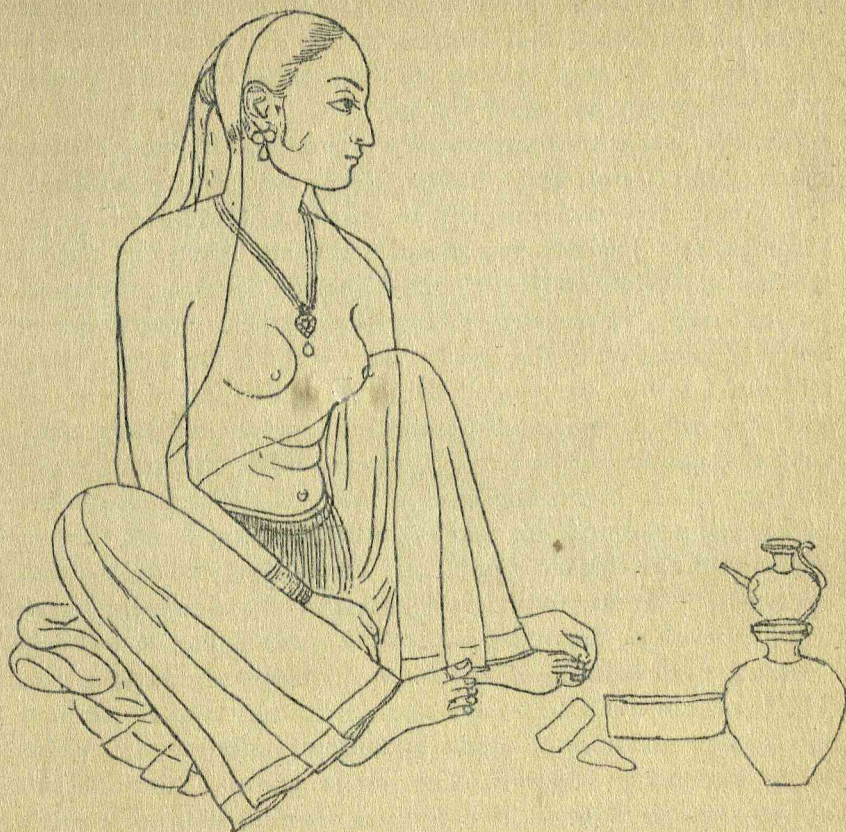


FIG. 42. *Portrait of a Hindu Lady (Rajput School).*

son of a poor palanquin-bearer, who used to amuse himself by drawing on walls. The Emperor recognised his talent, and sent him to Khwājā Abdus Samad's studio for training, but unfortunately he became insane and committed suicide. An even greater genius was another Hindu, Basāwan. "In background," says Abul Fazl, "drawing of features, distribution of colours, portrait-painting and several other branches, he excels, so that many critics prefer him to Daswānāth." Akbar used to pay



regular visits to the studios, and reward the artists according to their proficiency. The studios, with their staff of painters, calligraphists, grinders of colours and gilders, were busy hives of industry. Among the tasks undertaken in the Royal ateliers were an album containing portraits of His Majesty and the great nobles of the Court, and illustrations for the *Akbar Nāmā*, the *Rāz Nāmā* (a Persian version of the *Mahābhārata*), his grandfather's Memoirs, and other works.

Jahāngīr was a great connoisseur of painting. He speaks of two artists, Abul Hasan and Mansur, whom he specially admired. The former was commissioned to paint the frontispiece to his Memoirs, and Jahāngīr recognised his talent by raising him to the rank of a Grandee (Khān) of the Empire. Speaking of himself, Jahāngīr says, "when any work is brought before me, either of deceased artists or of the present day, without the names being told me, I say on the spur of the moment that it is the work of such and such a man. And if there be a picture containing many portraits, and each face be the work of a different master, I can discover which face is the work of each of them. If any other person has put in the eye and eyebrow of a face, I can discover whose work the original face is, and who has painted the eye and eyebrows."\* During the reign of Jahāngīr, Mogul painting began to be affected by European contact; Western influence is chiefly seen in greater naturalism, and the use of perspective and shading. The Jesuit Fathers brought with them numerous religious pictures, mostly reproductions of works by famous Italian artists, which were immensely admired. The court painters were adepts at copying. Sir Thomas Roe tells an amusing story of a wager which he had with Jahāngīr about a picture which he brought as a present. He said he would give a "painter's reward"—fifty rupees—to anyone who could imitate it with absolute accuracy. The same evening, six copies were laid in front of the English ambassador, who confessed himself unable to pick out the original. The Emperor was so merry and joyful at his artists' success that he 'craked like a Northern man.' Bernier's remarks on Indian painting are interesting. He says that all artists were in the pay of the Court or some nobleman, and could not exist apart from

\**Memoirs*, trans. Rogers and Beveridge, I, 20.



patronage. He admired the beauty, softness and delicacy of their paintings and miniatures, though he thought them deficient in 'just proportions and in the expression of the face.' He mentions a shield displaying the exploits of Akbar by a celebrated artist, which took seven years to complete.\*

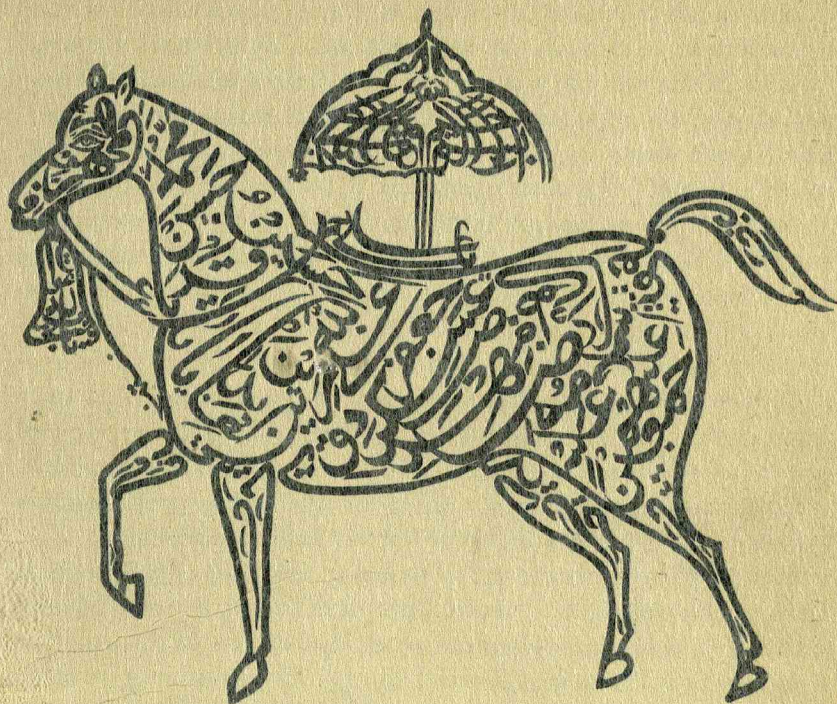


FIG. 43. Calligraphic Drawing composed of the names of the Twelve Imāms.

Mogul painting may be said to have reached its zenith under Jahāngīr. The Court artists now appear to have emancipated themselves from the Persian conventions which make the work of Akbar's time appear stiff and formal, and the best art of the period is delightfully fresh and natural—a happy blending of Iranian, Indian and European influences, while maintaining a character peculiarly its own. (Plate XXII). A saying attributed to Prince Daniyāl happily sums up the prevailing sentiment. "We are tired of the old wearisome tales of Laila Majnun, the moth and the nightingale. Let the poets and artists take for their subjects what

\* *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 255.



we have ourselves seen and heard.”\* And this is what they did. Instead of illustrations for Persian manuscripts, we have striking portraits, animated hunting scenes, and charming studies of animals, birds and flowers. Mansur in particular excelled in the latter, and examples survive in all the great collections. Their fidelity to nature is striking, and their flower studies should be compared to those in the *pietra dura* work on the palace walls.

Shāh Jahān was more interested in architecture than painting and during his reign the number of Court artists was reduced. Their work shows signs of approaching decadence in the lavish use of gold and other ornamentation. Most Mogul pictures are on paper, and the technique is generally the same. The surface is treated with a pigment and afterwards burnished. The outline is then drawn and the body-colours laid on in successive layers. The brush employed was of squirrel's hair, and a one-haired brush was used for the finest work. There are remains of mural paintings at Fathpur Sikri, and also at Bijāpur in the Deccan, but only fragments have survived. A single picture was often the work of a number of collaborators, one being responsible for the outline, a second for the colour and a third for the back-ground, while a calligraphist executed the floral border and superscription.

Closely allied with the art of painting was that of calligraphy. Calligraphy was the only form of art permitted by extreme Islamic orthodoxy, and was cultivated as assiduously in Muhammadan countries as in China and Japan. (Fig. 43). Connoisseurs gave large sums for the work of celebrated calligraphists. Calligraphy also entered largely into the decoration of the mosque; the ninety-nine Divine names and Koranic texts are inscribed round the portal and on the walls, and appear in the tracery of the windows. There are various types of lettering, from the stiff upright Kufic to the flowing Nastālik beloved of Akbar. The Imperial palaces contained immense libraries. The library of Agra, according to Father Manrique, who was there in 1641, contained 24,000 volumes, and was valued at six and a half million rupees, or nearly three-quarters of a million sterling. Most of these were dispersed or destroyed in the troubled times which followed on the death of Aurangzeb. Many albums of pictures found their way to

\*Quoted in N. C. Mehta, *Studies in Indian Painting* (Bombay, 1926), p. 75.









Europe, where they found warm admirers. Rembrandt and Sir Joshua Reynolds are among European artists who keenly appreciated the beauty and delicacy of Indian painting. Many fine collections exist in England and in various parts of Europe and may be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum and the India Office. A pathetic interest attaches to a particularly beautiful album in the latter place. It belonged to the gifted and ill-fated Dārā Shikoh, and bears the inscription: "This album was presented to his nearest and dearest friend, the lady Nādira Begam, by Prince Muhammad Dārā Shikoh, son of the Emperor Shāh Jahān, in the year 1051" (A.D. 1641-2).

Brief mention must be made of the other arts. Sculpture was cultivated to some extent, in spite of the Koranic prohibition, but no specimens have escaped the iconoclastic fury of Aurangzeb. The figures of two Rājās, said to be Jaimal and Patta, the defenders of Chitor in 1538, originally stood outside the gates of the fort at Delhi, and there were statues of Amar Singh the Rānā of Chitor and his son beneath the audience window at Agra. Jewelry reached a high degree of perfection: the crowning triumph of the jeweller's art was the famous Peacock Throne, the enamelled canopy of which was supported by twelve golden pillars inlaid with emeralds. Between the pillars were pairs of peacocks, encrusted with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and pearls. It was supported by six massive feet of solid gold. It was the work of the Court jeweller, Bebadal Khān, and took seven years to construct. There was a great demand for inlaid work, damascening and enamelling, and for the goldsmith's and silversmith's art. The Royal Mints turned out a fine series of gold, silver and copper coins. These were usually stamped with calligraphic devices, though Jahāngīr shocked orthodox sentiment by representing himself holding a wine-cup. Everyone wore gold and silver ornaments, and the amount of precious metal consumed in this way was incredible. The looms turned out fine carpets, brocades and silks. Indian muslins, shawls, and chintzes were famous all over the world. The bare, deserted halls of Agra and Delhi presented a very different appearance in 1659, when the Great Mogul, seated on his 'throne of royal state,' gave audience to his court. Here is Bernier's vivid description of the scene in 1659:



"At the foot of the throne were assembled all the Omrahs in splendid apparel, upon a platform surrounded by a silver railing and covered by a spacious canopy of brocade with deep fringes of gold. The pillars of the hall were hung with brocades of a gold ground, and flowered silken canopies were raised over the whole expanse of the extensive apartment, fastened with red silken cords from which were suspended large tassels of silk and gold. The floor was covered entirely with carpets of the richest silk, of immense length and breadth. A tent was pitched outside, larger than the hall, to which it was joined by the top. It spread over half the court, and was completely enclosed by a great balustrade covered with plates of silver. Its supporters were pillars overlaid with silver, three of which were as thick and as high as the mast of a barque, the other smaller. The outside of this magnificent tent was red, and the inside lined with elegant Masulipatam chintzes, figured expressly for that very purpose with flowers so natural and colours so vivid that the tent seemed to be encompassed with real parterres."\*

Literature flourished under the patronage of the Mogul Emperors, two of whom, Bābur and Jahāngīr, composed their own memoirs. Those of Bābur were written in his native Turki, but were translated into Persian in the reign of Akbar. At Akbar's court was gathered a galaxy of poets, musicians and men of letters. Of the poets enumerated by Abul Fazl, the best was his brother Faizi, extracts from whose compositions are given in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, or Institutions of Akbar. Of the historians of the age incomparably the greatest is Abul Fazl himself. His vast *Akbar Nāma* or Life of Akbar, of which the *Ain-i-Akbari* is a part, is the most important historical work which India has produced. The first part contains a history of the House of Timūr down to the forty-sixth year of the Emperor; the remainder is a Gazetteer. It deals with the Imperial Household and Court; the military and civil services; the judicial and executive departments, including finance and land revenue; the social, religious and literary characteristics of the Hindu population; and lastly, the sayings

\**Travels in the Mogul Empire*, pp. 268-70.





and observations of Akbar himself. Written in a spirit of frank hero-worship, it has earned for its author the title of the Mogul Boswell. No details, from the revenues of a province to the price of a pine-apple, are beyond his microscopic and patient investigation, but his annals have none of the pregnant meaning and point that in a few master-strokes exalt or brand a name to all time, and flash the actors of the drama across the living page in scenes that dwell for ever in the memory.\* Some of the most important undertakings of the men of letters of the Mogul Court were the translation into Persian of standard Sanskrit works. A deep interest was taken in Hindu philosophy, and Faizi, the Poet Laureate, rendered the *Bhagavad Gītā* into Persian verse. Dārā Shikoh was a student of the Vedānta and the Upanishads. Persian abridgements of the Hindu Epics, the Purāṇas, and the *Līlāvati* (a treatise on mathematics) were made.

With the accession of Aurangzeb, a deadly blight fell upon the arts. The Court musicians, artists and historians were dismissed, and no important buildings were erected save a few mosques on the site of Hindu temples which had been demolished. Though an accomplished poet, Aurangzeb discouraged poetry on the ground that poets dealt in falsehood. History was banned, because it gave rise to feelings of undue pride. "After the expiration of ten years, authors were forbidden to write the events of this just and righteous Emperor's name." Paintings on the walls of Fathpur Sikri and Bijāpur were defaced as idolatrous, and Aurangzeb even gave up showing himself at the audience-window because his subjects gave him worship only due to the Creator. A well known story relates how one day he heard a funeral procession passing the palace. On asking whose funeral it was, he was told that the mourners were bearing the corpse of music to his grave. "Bury him deep," replied the Emperor, "that not a sound of him comes to my ears." Bernier gives a pathetic picture of the condition of the unfortunate court artists, only called in as occasion arose, grudgingly rewarded for their work, and lucky if they escaped without a flogging as part-payment.†

\* *Ain-i-Akbari*, trans. Blochmann and Jarret (Calcutta, 1873, 1891), Vol. II, Preface.

† *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, pp. 255-6.



The Mogul Court at the height of its glory resembled in many respects that of Versailles. In both cases a fabulously wealthy and extravagant nobility were living a life of the utmost luxury, at the expense of an overtaxed and starving peasantry. In both cases, the art of the period was an art fostered by the Court, the art of the jeweller and miniature painter, with few roots in the life of the people. In neither instance did it survive the downfall of its patrons, and in India the decadence was rapid. The buildings erected by the royal family of Oudh, the chief centre of Muslim culture in the north after the decline of the Moguls, are tawdry abominations. But in Rājputāna and a few other Hindu states, the traditional arts have survived, and master-masons continue to work on the traditional lines. It is a matter of regret that the great opportunity to utilise their services in the building of the New Delhi in 1911 was allowed to slip.

#### EDUCATION UNDER THE MUHAMMADANS

The high degree of culture in Mogul India was largely the result of the excellent system of education. Education was considered to be a religious duty; at the age of four, the boy, if he were the son of rich parents, was given a silver-mounted slate inscribed with a chapter of the Koran and was handed over to a tutor; if poor, he was sent to the Muktab or primary school kept by the Mullah, which was attached to every mosque. Here he learnt by heart the Kalima or creed and certain verses from the Koran which were necessary for his daily devotions. To this were added the *Hadis* or Traditions of the Prophet, the three R's and Persian. Elegant penmanship was cultivated, and if the boy wished to learn the arts and crafts, he was apprenticed to an Ustād or master. Catrou gives an interesting description of the education of the young Mogul princes: "Whilst they remain in the harem, under the eye of their father, a eunuch is charged with their education. They are brought to read, and sometimes to write, in Arabic and Persian. Their bodies are formed to military exercises, and they are instructed in the principles of equity. They are taught to decide rationally upon subjects of dispute which occur, or on suppositious suits at law. Finally, they are instructed





in the Muhammadan religion and in the interests of the nation which they may be called one day to govern."\* After leaving school, the more advanced went to the Madrassah or college, where the curriculum was mainly religious. The chief subjects taught were theology, mathematics and physics, but Persian *belles lettres* were added. But education in India was in very much the same state as in Medieval Europe. There had been no Indian Renaissance. Akbar had designs for making the curriculum more practical, but it is doubtful whether they were enforced, and Bernier comments on the lack of secular Universities of the European type, and he tells an amusing story of the reproaches which the Emperor Aurangzeb heaped on his tutor for wasting his time on the subtleties of Arabic metaphysics to the neglect of practical subjects such as geography and politics. "Forgetting how many important subjects ought to be embraced in the education of a prince, you acted as if it were chiefly necessary he should possess great skill in grammar!"

Women, owing to the purdah system, could not attend public institutions, but in nearly every nobleman's establishment a schoolmistress or governess was kept. Muhammadan noblemen demanded culture in their wives, and Akbar, always in advance of his age, built a girls' school at Fathpur Sikri. Many Muhammadan women were patrons of literature and themselves writers. The memoirs of Gulbādān Begam, Akbar's aunt, are well-known, and his foster-mother, Māham Anaga, endowed a college at Delhi. Akbar's wife, Salima Sultāna, the famous Empress Mumtāz Mahāl, and Aurangzeb's sister, the princess Jahanāra Begam, were poetesses of note. Muhammadan women, despite purdah, governed empires and led armies in the field: among these, the Sultana Razzayat of Delhi, Chānd Bibī, the heroic defender of Ahmadnagar, and the masterful Nūr Jahān, were the most distinguished.

#### VERNACULAR LITERATURE

Mention must be made of the growth of vernacular literature during the Mogul period. Far away from the Imperial court, the Hindu peasant pursued his immemorial vocations, little

\*Catron, *History of the Empire of the Great Mogul* (1709), p. 328.



influenced by the great world around. Mention has been made of the devotional movement, which centred round the worship of Vishnu in his various incarnations, especially as Krishna and Rāma. In Hindustan, a great leader had arisen in the person of Vallabha Āchārya (1479-1531), who had done much to spread the worship of Krishna among the masses; his teaching was carried by Chaitanya into Bengal, where it made a strong appeal.



FIG. 44. Calligraphic Drawing: Krishna and the Gopis.

Chaitanya was deeply emotional; he would sit with his disciples, chanting the praises of the Divine Name, until they became excited to the utmost pitch of religious ecstasy, and after this they would march through the Bengal towns and villages, with drums beating and flags flying, singing hymns in honour of Krishna and his consort Rādhā. (Fig. 44). Thanks to Chaitanya's teaching, Bengal experienced a religious revival, and the worship of Krishna is immensely popular all over that part of the country to-day. It is a relief to turn from the erotic and sensuous cult of Krishna to that of the hero-god Rāma. The greatest of the devotees of Rāma was Tulsi Dās, who was born near Delhi about





A.D. 1532. Tulsi Dās was a Brahmin, but he determined to compose a poem in praise of his god, not in Sanskrit but in the language of the people. "My lot," he says in his introduction, "is low, but my purpose high; I am confident of one thing: that the good will be gratified, though fools may laugh." He warns his readers to expect no sexual appeal in the "Lake of Rāma's Deeds," which was the title which he gave to his poem. "Here are no prurient and seductive stories, like snails or frogs or scum on the water, and therefore the lustful crow and the greedy crane, if they do come, are disappointed." The Rāmāyana of Tulsi Das, as the poem is popularly called, is recited and read all over Northern India to-day. It retells the old story of Valmiki in simple, moving verse, but with the difference that Rāma is no longer a dead hero, but a living Saviour. The following quotation is from a passage of great beauty in which Rāma's mother soliloquises over the Divine Infant lying in her arms:—

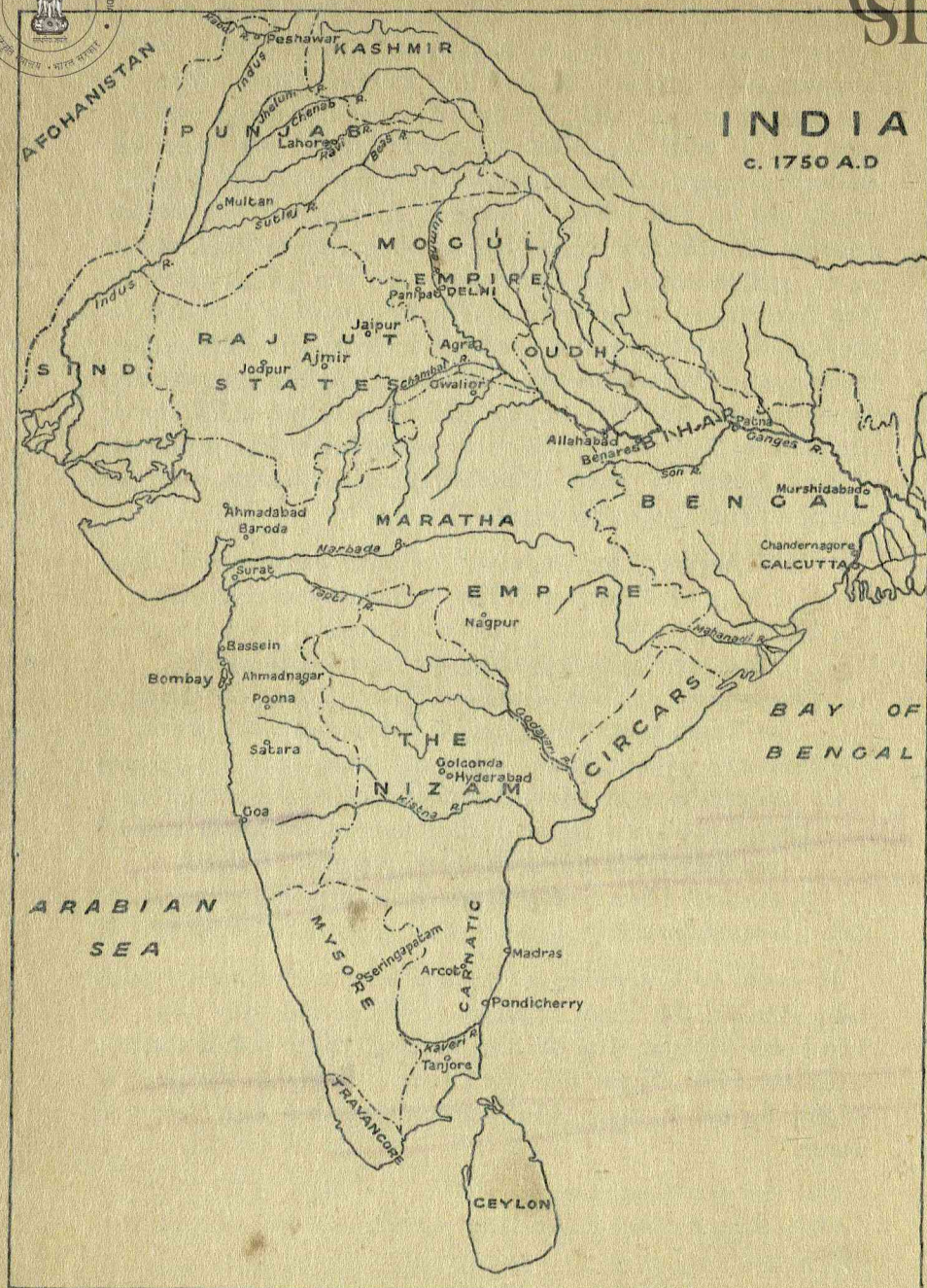
"With fingers locked in prayer she cries: 'How may I dare,  
O Lord God immortal, Thy boundless praise to tell?  
Far above the world's confusion and season's vain intrusion,  
Whom all the Scriptures witness incomprehensible;  
Whom saints and holy sages have hymned through all the ages,  
the fountain of compassion, the source of every grace;  
Who aye with Lakshmi reignest, Thou, even Thou, now  
deignest to be my son and succour thy sore-tried chosen race.  
Though we know by revelation, heaven and earth and all  
creation in each hair upon Thy body may be found,  
In my arms Thou sweetly dreamest, O mystery supremest, far  
beyond the comprehension of a sage the most profound.' ""\*

It would be impossible to mention here the numerous poets who enriched the Hindi language at this period—Sūr Dās, the blind poet of Agra, Mirā Bai and a host of others. "Sūr is the sun, Tulsi the moon, Kesav Dās is a cluster of stars, but the poets of to-day are like so many glow-worms giving their light here and there."†

\*Growse's translation, p. 96.

†F. E. Keay, *A History of Hindi Literature*, Heritage of India Series, Oxford, 1920.





MAP 12. India A.D. 1750



THE RENASCENCE OF HINDUISM—SIKHS AND  
MARĀTHĀS AND THE END OF INDIAN RULE

## THE HINDU RENASCENCE

ONE of the most remarkable facts of Indian history is the vitality of Hinduism. Hindu India had suffered sorely at the hands of her Muhammadan conquerors. Many Hindus had been compelled by force, or for economic reasons, to accept Islam; priests had been killed, temples destroyed wholesale, and the schools of Sanskrit learning closed. But the torch had been kept alight and handed down, chiefly owing to the *bhakti* or devotional movement, which survived all persecution. In India, patriotism had always worn a religious aspect, and, as pointed out in the opening chapter of this work, 'cows and Brahmins' are the objects for which the Hindu is, first and foremost, willing to sacrifice everything. Had Akbar's wise policy towards his subjects been continued by his successors, the Hindu renascence would have doubtless followed purely religious lines: it was persecution which drove it into political channels. The *bhakti* movement, it is interesting to note, was a popular one. Its strength lay, not among the Brahmins or in the Rājput courts, but the common people. It was, indeed, strongly anti-Brahmanical. In the 17th century it centred chiefly round two nations, the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Marāthās in the Deccan.

## THE SIKHS

In 1469, when the Sultans of the Lodi dynasty were clinging precariously to the throne of Delhi, Nānak, the founder of the Sikh sect, was born on the banks of the Rāvi near Lahore. He was the son of a corn-merchant. Nānak became a follower of Kabīr, who had died about half a century previously. Like Kabīr, Nānak tried to find a common bond between Hinduism and Islam. "God has said," he declared, "that man shall be saved by his works alone. God will not ask a man his tribe or sect, but what he has done." "In the beginning was the Real, in the



beginning of the ages was the Real. The Real, O Nānak, is, and the Real will also be." "There is no Hindu and no Mussalman," was another of his sayings. When called upon to explain his attitude by the Muhammadan governor, he is said to have replied in a verse which has now been incorporated in the Sikh scriptures:—

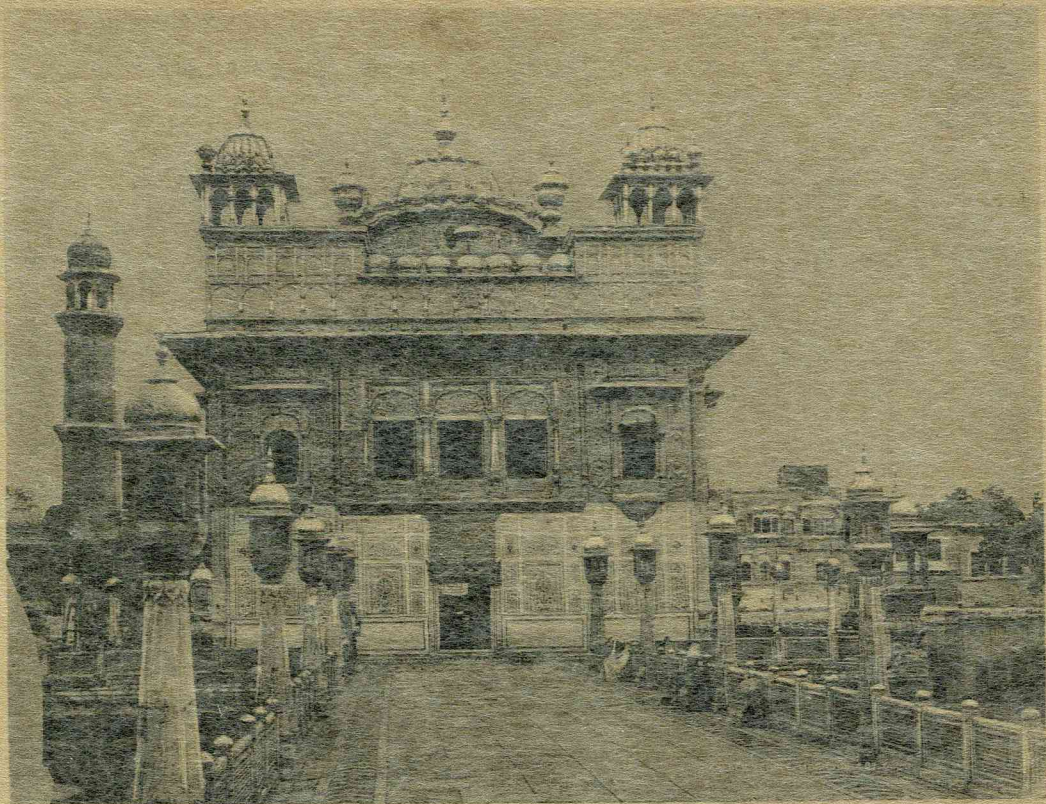
Make love thy mosque; sincerity thy prayer-carpet; justice thy Koran;  
 Modesty thy circumcision; courtesy thy Kaaba; truth thy Guru; charity thy creed and prayer;  
 The will of God thy rosary, and God will preserve thine honour, O Nānak.

Nānak went about the Punjab, preaching in mosques, Jain temples and Brahmanical shrines, and gathered a following of Sikhs or disciples. He retained the Hindu doctrines of karmā and transmigration, but rejected the Vedas, caste, idolatry and the authority of the Brahmins. To those who rebuked him for breaking caste, he replied in another remarkable stanza, said to have been addressed to pilgrims assembled at the great annual bathing festival at Hardwār:—

Evil-mindedness is the low-caste woman; cruelty is the butcher's wife; a slanderous heart the sweeper-woman; wrath the pariah woman.  
 What availeth it to have drawn lines round thy cooking-place, when these four sit ever with thee?  
 Make truth, self-restraint and good acts thy lines, and the utterance of the Name thine ablutions.  
 Nānak, in the next world, he is best, who walketh not in the way of sin.

It is even stated that Nānak performed the Hāj; on one occasion, when he was reproached with sleeping with "his feet towards God" (*i.e.* Mecca), he replied: "Show me a direction where God is not." The Guru or spiritual preceptor plays a leading part in Hinduism, and when Nānak felt death approaching in 1583, he appointed one of his disciples as his successor. There









vere in all ten such Gurus or Pontiffs. The first four were peaceful leaders of a small and struggling sect, which gathered adherents among the lower orders chiefly owing to its rejection of caste. Akbar, always liberal towards religious movements, granted Rām Dās, the fourth Guru, a piece of land near Lahore, on the banks of a tank which, on account of its healing properties, had acquired the name of the Pool of Immortality (Amritsar.) Here the Guru built a shrine, the precursor of the famous Golden Temple (Plate XXIII) erected by Ranjit Singh, and Amritsar became the Mecca of the Sikhs. In 1604 the fifth Guru, Arjun, compiled from the inspired utterances of Kabīr and other teachers, and his own predecessors, the *Adi Granth* or Original Bible of the Sikhs. Arjun was the first of the Gurus to fall foul of the Mogul government. He helped Khusru, Jahāngīr's rebel son, and refused to pay the heavy fine imposed upon the sect for their contumacy. For this he was tortured and beheaded. But the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. His son Hargobind turned the Sikhs into a militant order. When his disciples wished to invest him with the turban and necklace, he replied, "My necklace shall be my sword-belt, and my turban shall be adorned with the royal aigrette." After spending twelve years in a Mogul prison, he carried on a relentless war against the Imperial armies. Following a period of comparative peace during the reign of Shāh Jahān, the ninth Guru, Teg Bahādūr, was haled to Delhi by the Emperor Aurangzeb. Before he left, he invested his son Gobind with his sword. At Delhi, Teg Bahādūr was brought before Aurangzeb and charged with presuming to gaze from the roof of his abode upon the apartments of the ladies of the royal harem. According to a famous story, he replied; "Emperor Aurangzeb, I was on the top storey of my prison, but I was not looking at thy private apartment, or thy Queen's. I was looking in the direction of the Europeans who are coming from beyond the seas to tear down thy *purdahs* and destroy thy Empire." Whether this legend is true or not, it was firmly believed, and was used by the Sikhs as their battle-cry when they marched under their English officers to the siege of Delhi in 1857.

Teg Bahādūr received the crown of martyrdom in 1675, and his son Gobind, the tenth and last Guru, at once started to





organise his followers into a great military fraternity, like the Knight Templars of Medieval Europe. They were to be known henceforth as the Khālśa or Elect, and the members adopted the surname of Singh or Lion. A ceremony of initiation known as the Baptism of the Sword was introduced, in which the initiates had to drink water stirred by a dagger, and partake of a sacramental meal of cakes prepared from consecrated flour. By this act they finally renounced caste, for sweeper and Brahmin sat down to eat side by side. The reversal of previous customs was striking and complete. "A scavenger or leather-dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave his home and join the Guru, when in a short time he would return to his birthplace as its ruler." Members of the Khālśa swore to abjure wine and tobacco and to adopt five objects beginning with the letter *k*,—long hair, short drawers, comb, a dagger and an iron discus.\* The Granth or Bible was revised and installed in the temple at Amritsar, where it was treated with extraordinary reverence. A copy is carried in front of Sikh regiments on the march to-day.

Gobind Singh was murdered by a Pathan in 1708, and with him the line of the Gurus came to an end. Their work was done; henceforth the Khālśa and the Granth were to be the guides of the members of the sect. But he appointed a military successor of the name of Bandah, known as the 'false Guru', and under him the Sikhs attacked and plundered Sirhind, slaying the Muhammadan inhabitants without pity, and defiling the mosques. They brought upon their heads condign punishment at the hands of the Imperial troops. The Sikhs had entrenched themselves in the town of Gurdāspur. This was captured after heavy fighting, and Bandah, his wife and son and a thousand survivors were sent to Delhi. The Sikhs were paraded round Delhi with blackened faces and put to death. Bandah was exhibited in an iron cage; his little son was slain before his eyes before he was executed. A story told by the historian Khāfī Khān shows the temper of the followers of the Khālśa. A mother had wrung from the Emperor a pardon for her son, and arrived on the ground with it in her hand, just as the executioner was raising his bloody sword. But

\**Kes, Kaccha, Kankan, Kripan, Kangha.*





The youth burst into reproaches, saying, "My mother tells a falsehood. I join with heart and soul my fellow-believers in devotion to the Guru. Send me quickly after my companions."

During the troubled times that befel the Punjab in the eighteenth century, the Sikhs suffered severely. Ahmad Shāh Durrāni, the Afghan invader, destroyed the Amritsar temple, having defiled it with cows' blood. With the retirement of the Afghans, the Sikhs slowly returned from the fastnesses in which they had taken refuge, and exacted a terrible vengeance on the Muhammadan population. But they had now greatly degenerated. They had become little more than a confederacy of independent robber chiefs, whose only law was the sword, and the teaching of the Gurus was well-nigh forgotten.

It was at this low ebb of their fortunes that Ranjit Singh, the greatest of the Sikh leaders, was born. He became head of his family in 1792, at the age of twelve, and very early he formed the desire to unite the Sikhs in a separate nation. He recovered Lahore and Amritsar, and at the latter place he built the famous Golden Temple on the site desecrated by the Afghans. He took the strong fortress of Multan, mainly by the help of the famous Zam Zam gun (the 'Luck' of the Sikhs), and occupied the frontier city of Peshawar. He imported two distinguished Napoleonic veterans, Ventura and Allard, to train his troops, and Court, Gardner, Van Courtland and Avitabile and other Europeans occupied positions of trust in his state.

Ranjit Singh bore no love for the English, whose growing influence he distrusted and feared. It is related that, on being shown a map of India, he exclaimed in disgust, "*Sab lāl hojayeگا!*" "Soon it will *all* be red!" But he was far too prudent to challenge them, and in 1809 a 'treaty of amity' was signed, recognising the Sutlej as the boundary between the two powers. The English, on the other hand, were anxious to maintain the Sikhs as a buffer-state between themselves and Afghanistan in the event of a Russo-Afghan invasion of India, fear of which had become a bugbear with the British government. In 1831 a meeting was arranged between Ranjit Singh and Lord Amherst, the Governor-General at Rupar on the Sutlej. The scene was an Oriental Field of the Cloth of Gold. The flower of the Sikh army, barbaric horse-





men in shining armour with heron's plumes in their helmets, was present. Sports and tourneys were held and for days the troops fraternised while the Mahārājā and Governor-General looked on.

In an evil hour, the Indian government, obsessed by its apprehensions of Russian influence in Afghanistan, was led into the folly of trying to depose Dost Muhammad, the king of Kābul, and to replace him by Shāh Shūjā, a weak and unpopular ruler who had been for some time a refugee in British territory. It was hoped that Shāh Shūjā would rule Afghanistan as a puppet in British hands. Ranjit Singh, nothing loth to seize an opportunity for humiliating his ancient rivals, signed a 'tripartite treaty' with Shāh Shūjā and the British, by which he agreed to support the pretender. The tragic story of the first Afghan war happily falls outside the scope of the present work. The invaders reached Kābul in August 1838, and placed Shāh Shūjā on the throne. But the Afghans, who value their liberty above everything, rose *en masse* against the foreign army of occupation. The British envoy was murdered, and in January 1841, in the depth of winter, General Elphinstone, who was in command of the army of occupation, decided upon evacuation. On the 13th, a solitary horseman, badly wounded, appeared at the gates of the frontier fortress of Jalālābād. It was Dr. Brydon, a regimental surgeon. He announced that the whole of Elphinstone's army, "guns, standards, honour and all", had been annihilated by the tribesmen in the snow-bound passes of the Hindu Kush. So terrible a tragedy struck a fatal blow to the hitherto invincible prestige of the British arms, whose luck had been regarded as proverbial. Meanwhile, in 1839, Ranjit Singh passed away at the age of fifty-nine. He was altogether an extraordinary figure. He is described as small and partly paralysed, with the long beard prescribed by the Sikh religion. He had lost an eye through smallpox, and it is typical of the Mahārājā's awe-inspiring personality that when his minister was asked which eye it was, he replied, "such is the splendour of his face, that I have never dared to look close enough to discover." Four queens and seven slave-girls followed their lord to the pyre, for the Sikhs, in defiance of the teaching of the Gurus, had revived the dreadful rite of suttee.





Delhi was always an irresistible lure to the Sikhs, and the Afghan disaster had fatally lowered British prestige, which had only partially been restored by Sir Charles Napier's spectacular conquest of Sind from its Baluch rulers, the Talpur Amirs, in 1843. Deprived of the restraining hand of Ranjit Singh, in December 1845, the army of the Khālsa, over 50,000 strong, with nearly five hundred guns, crossed the Sutlej and invaded British territory. A series of fierce battles ensued, and in February 1846 the Sikhs were bloodily defeated. The young Maharājā, Dhuleep Singh, was installed with Sir Henry Lawrence as Resident at Lahore, and a band of brilliant Englishmen, destined to become household words in Indian history—the Lawrence brothers, Edwardes, Nicholson, Abbott, Lumsden, Montgomery—took over the administration. Henry Lawrence sent his lieutenants to take charge of districts half as big as England, and their only orders were to "settle the country, make the people happy, and take care there are no rows!" Their presence was welcomed by the peasantry, who found the just if stern rule of the English a vast relief after General Avitabile, the monster who blew men from guns, flayed them alive and impaled them and inflicted other cruel punishments copied from the Moguls. But the proud Sikh aristocracy thought otherwise. They sorely chafed under the rule of the aliens who curtailed their ancient liberties and deprived them of their privileges, and in 1848 a rising of the soldiery took place at Multan, in which two British officers lost their lives. Dalhousie, now Governor-General, was nothing loth to take up the challenge. "The Sikh nation has called for war, and upon my word, Sirs, they shall have it with a vengeance!" The campaign was even more fiercely contested than the previous one, but at Sabraon the army of the Khālsa fought its last heroic fight (February 21st, 1849). On March 12th, thirty-five Sardars of rank laid down their swords, and the Sikh soldiers filed past, flinging their weapons upon the pile. Then, raising their hands to them in the Hindu form of salutation, they returned to their fields. "To-day Ranjit Singh is dead," a grizzled warrior was heard to exclaim. The Maharājā's forebodings had come true. "It had all become red." England was mistress of India from Cape Comorin to the Khyber Pass.





## THE MARĀTHĀS

The traveller from Bombay to Poona in the latter stages of his journey ascends the Western Ghauts and finds himself in a region of winding, forest-clad valleys and flat-topped hills, the latter often crowned with curtain and bastion, and forming ideal places of refuge. This is the Mahārāstra, 'hard, but a good nursing mother,' as was said aforetime of stony Ithaca. It is the home of the Marāthās, frugal, hardy peasants, who scrape a scanty living from the soil of their barren but beloved country. As a class, the Marāthās are manly and intelligent, independent and liberal, courteous, and, when kindly treated, trusting. Contrasting them with the Rājputs, Mountstuart Elphinstone says: "If they have none of the pride and dignity of the Rājputs, they have none of their indolence or want of worldly wisdom. A Rājput warrior, so long as he does not dishonour his race, seems almost indifferent to the result of any contest he is engaged in. A Marāthā thinks of nothing *but* the result, and cares little for the means, if he can attain his object. For this purpose, he will strain his wits, renounce his pleasures, and hazard his person; but he has not the conception of sacrificing his life, or even his interest, for a point of honour. . . . The chiefs in those days were men of families who had for generations filled the old Hindu offices of heads of villages or functionaries of districts, and had often been employed as functionaries under the government of Ahmadnagar and Bijāpur. They were all Sūdras, of the same caste with their people, though some tried to raise their consequence by claiming an infusion of Rājput blood."

The Marāthās are profoundly pious. They were very early affected by the *bhakti* movement, which here centred round the shrine of a god named Vithoba, who dwelt at Pandharpur on the river Bhima in the heart of the Deccan. The name Vithoba appears to be a corruption of Vishnu and he is identified by his devotees with Krishna. Religion in the Deccan is, like the people themselves, homely and democratic. Worshippers of Vithoba made a determined stand against the pretensions of the Brahmins, and, as has been already mentioned, one of the earliest works in the Marāthi language was a vernacular paraphrase of the *Bhagavad*





*Sūta* by Jñānesvar at the end of the 13th century A.D. The Brahmins were deeply shocked by Jñānesvar's profanity in turning the scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and one legend relates that he confounded his opponents by causing a she-buffalo to recite the Veda! But the most popular of all the poet-saints of the Deccan was Tukārām. Tukārām was born in 1608. He was a humble grain-dealer by profession, but from boyhood he had been absorbed in the worship of Vithoba. Many stories are related of his unworldly and simple character. He gave away his goods to the poor and starving, and allowed unscrupulous men to cheat and rob him. The climax came in 1631. A terrible famine swept over the Deccan; his wife and child perished of hunger, and he determined to devote himself entirely to religion. He is said, like Saint Francis of Assisi, to have had a wonderful influence over beasts and birds. He betook himself to the temple at Pandharpur, and began to compose the lyric verses in honour of the god which are household words all over the Deccan to-day. Tukārām was overwhelmed by his passionate love for Vithoba, which he poured out in song after song. The following is a typical hymn:—

As the bride looks back to her mother's house,  
And goes, but with dragging feet,  
So my soul looks up unto Thee and longs  
That Thou and I may meet.

As a child cries out and is sore distressed  
When its mother it cannot see:  
As a fish that is taken from out the wave,  
So 'tis, says Tuka, with me.\*

The Brahmins, it is said, cruelly persecuted Tukārām. "How dares this Sūdra," they said, "enter the presence of God?" At one time he was dragged through a hedge of thorns: at another the manuscript in which he had written his inspired utterances was taken and thrown into the river, but by the miraculous

\*N. MacNicol, *Psalms of the Marāṭhā Saints*, Heritage of India Series, Oxford, 1919, p. 56.



intervention of the god, it was found floating unharmed. After this, the priests no longer barred his way to the shrine.

It was this admission to the sacred mysteries of men and women of all castes—Muhammadan converts, farmers, tailors, gardeners, potters, goldsmiths, repentant prostitutes and slave girls, and even the outcaste Mahārs or scavengers—which made the temple of Vithoba a national centre of worship. Thousands may still be seen at the time of the great annual festival, thronging the roads leading to Pandharpur, carrying the orange flag which is the hall-mark of the pilgrim, often with their wives and families and their worldly goods packed upon bullock-carts, and chanting devotional verses from their favourite poets as marching-songs. As one watches the vast orderly multitude winding its way across the hills, and breaking into ecstatic cries as their goal comes into sight, the mind inevitably goes back to similar scenes which must have been enacted on the road to Canterbury in the days when England was still a religious country. At the shrine the vast crowds take part in the song-services, and listen for hours to recitations and expositions of the sacred text. In this manner was kept alive the national spirit during the dark days of Muhammadan rule which succeeded the overthrow of the last Hindu monarchy of the Deccan until a leader arose in the person of Sivājī.

Sivājī was born, according to most authorities, in the year 1627. His father Shāhji, of the Bhonsle family, was a soldier of fortune who had enlisted in the service of the Muhammadan Kingdom of Ahmadnagar. For this purpose he had raised a troop of Marāthā horse, and even set up a puppet Sultan. In 1636, however, he was defeated by the Imperial army, and transferred his services to the state of Bijāpur. He had married a lady of the name of Jijābāi, of an old Marāthā family. While Shāhji was away on his campaigns in the far south, Jijābāi retired to Junnar near Poona, and here, in the lofty hill-fortress of Sivner, overlooking the town, her son was born. He was brought up by his mother with the aid of a Brahmin tutor named Dādāji Kondeva. Jijābāi was a pious woman, devoted to the worship of the goddess Ambā Bhavāni. The boy was brought up on the stories of Rāma and the Pāndava princes, the heroes of the ancient





Indian epics. He would listen for hours to the recitations and songs so popular in the Deccan. It is said that when Poona was in the hands of the Muhammadans, he risked his life in penetrating the enemy lines in order to be present at one of these recitals. Thus, though, like Akbar, Sivājī seems never to have learned to read or write, he was early imbued with an intense love of his country and religion, and a hatred of its foreign rulers, the oppressors of "cows and Brahmins." During his boyhood, he was constantly in the company of the Mavalis, the hillmen of that part of the Deccan, who taught him to ride and shoot, and to find his way about the tangled maze of pathless jungle which then covered a great part of the country. It was an ideal training for his future career as soldier and liberator.

It was not until the death of his old tutor, however, that Sivājī, now twenty years old, profited by the wars going on in the far south to seize a number of hill-forts, some by surprise and others by bribery, in the Poona district. When the Bijāpur authorities heard of this, they arrested Sivājī's father; but Shāhjī explained that he had no control over his son, and was released. Meanwhile Sivājī was building up a small, independent state for himself; a rival chief was murdered, and Purandhar, a very powerful fortress, was occupied. Khāfī Khān, the Mogul historian, thus describes the rise of Sivājī:—

"He was remarkable for courage and quick wits, and in craft and guile he was a clever son of the devil, the father of fraud. In that country, where all the hills rise to the sky, and jungles are dense with woods and bushes, he had an inaccessible lair. Like the landholders of those parts, he set about building forts. Adil Khān of Bijāpur fell sick and, in the ensuing confusion, Sivājī boldly and fraudulently seized the district with some of the neighbouring estates. This was the beginning of the system of tyranny which his descendants spread over the rest of the Konkan and all the Deccan.\* Wherever he heard of a prosperous town or district inhabited by thriving farmers, he plundered it and seized it. He gathered a large force of Marāthā robbers and plunderers,

\*The Konkan is the country below, and the Deccan that above the Ghauts.



and began reducing fortresses. Day by day he increased in strength, reduced all the forts and ravaged the country far and wide. He built some forts, until he had altogether forty, all well supplied with provisions and arms. Boldly raising the standard of rebellion, he became the most noted rebel of the Deccan." (Fig. 45).



FIG. 45. *Sivaji*.

From Valentyn's *Oud en Nieuw Ost Indiën* (1724).

In 1659 the Mogul forces had temporarily withdrawn from the Deccan, and the Bijāpur government sent a well equipped army of some 10,000 men, under Afzal Khān, a great noble, to chastise the rebel. Afzal Khān boasted that he would bring Sivājī back in chains without dismounting from his horse. On his way northwards, he entered the temple of Ambā Bhavāni, the tutelary guardian of the Bhonsle family, ground the idol to powder, and defiled it and other Hindu shrines. This impolitic action raised the Marāthās all over the countryside to join Sivājī in the defence of their religion. As the Bijāpur army advanced, Sivājī withdrew before it into the mountainous country around the present hill-station of Mahābleswar. Here he had built himself a veritable eagle's eyrie, which he named Pratāpgarh or the





strong fortress, on the very edge of the Western Ghauts. He was in a desperate position; his back was to the wall, and he could retreat no farther. Nor was Afzal Khān's position very much happier. His troops were being drawn into wild, pathless country and he was unable to bring his wily adversary to action. Both, therefore, were ready to negotiate. Of the events which followed, accounts are conflicting. Afzal Khān and Sivājī agreed to meet in a cleared space beneath the fort. It may be that either hoped to seize by treachery the person of the other. What actually happened, however, was that Sivājī, pretending to embrace his opponent, stabbed him with the 'tiger claws', a terrible weapon consisting of sharp, steel hooks attached to the fingers, and cut him down. The Bijāpur army was then attacked by the Marāthās, who were lying in ambush. Taken by surprise, it was utterly routed, and its much needed horses, arms, stores and ammunition fell into Sivājī's hands. He chivalrously stopped the slaughter of the fugitives, and dismissed his prisoners after caring for them and tending to their wounds.

In 1660 the Emperor Aurangzeb left the task of restoring order in the Deccan to his maternal uncle, Shayista Khān. The Marāthās, however, were too wily to be drawn into an engagement, and retired to the mountains. The Khān took up his winter quarters in the town of Poona; Sivājī and a picked body of Marāthās entered the gates disguised as a wedding party, and in the middle of the night attacked the unfortunate noble as he lay asleep. Shayista Khān barely escaped with his life, and was so alarmed that he applied for a transfer to Bengal. In 1664 Sivājī brought off his most successful *coup*. On the coast of Gujarāt was the wealthy port of Surat, the great emporium of trade with the West, and the point of departure for pilgrims to Mecca. Secretly collecting a large force, the Marāthā leader swooped down upon Surat. The cowardly Mogul governor shut himself up in the castle, and left the inhabitants to the tender mercies of the invaders. For two days the town was plundered, and the rich Hindu traders were forced by torture to surrender their concealed wealth. The only resistance which the Marāthās encountered was from the English factors, who, under their President, Sir George Oxenden, put their factory into a state of defence, called up the sailors from the



ships in the harbour, and threatened to open fire on anyone who molested them. The Marāthās, having utterly pillaged the city, disappeared as swiftly and silently as they had come, loaded with an immense booty.

Aurangzeb was so much impressed by the menace of this new danger that he sought to come to terms. Through Rājā Jai Singh of Jaipur, he sent Sivāji an invitation to visit Agra and make his submission. Sivāji agreed to do so, but on presenting himself at Court he found himself treated as a mere Commander of 5,000, and not as a ruling prince. He left the royal presence in a fit of rage. Aurangzeb's tortuous methods of dealing with political opponents were well-known, and Sivāji now found himself practically a prisoner in his apartments. Feigning sickness, however, he managed to escape, concealed in a sweetmeat basket, and at the end of 1665, after wandering in various disguises almost all over northern India, he once more returned to his people. In 1674 Sivāji was crowned king of the Marāthās amid great rejoicings at his fortress of Raigarh. An Englishman, Henry Oxenden, was present at the ceremony. In 1676 Sivāji made a great expedition to the Carnatic, as far south as Tanjore. His object was to claim his share of the territories which his father Shāhji held as a feudatory of Bijāpur, and which had fallen to the lot of his brother Vyānkoji. Grant Duff, the historian of the Marāthās, says that this undertaking marks him as the foremost soldier of his age. "In the course of eighteen months, at a distance of 700 miles from his base, he had conquered a territory as large as his former kingdom. While a single reverse would have been fatal, he had not suffered a single check. Victory had succeeded victory; town had fallen after town. As he went, he organised his conquests, and when he returned to Raigarh, his new possessions were securely bound together from sea to sea by a line of fortified strongholds held by garrisons brave to the death and devoted to the cause." He was now at the zenith of his power. He had liberated the Marāthās, and set up once more a Hindu Rāj in the Deccan. Bijāpur and Golkonda were glad to make alliances with the erstwhile rebel. Even the Emperor Aurangzeb was constrained to admit that the "Mountain Rat" had proved too much for him. "My armies have been employed





Against him for nineteen years," he said, "and nevertheless his state has always been increasing." Sivāji was no mere conqueror. He excelled equally as an organiser. He broke up the power of the old feudal aristocracy by abolishing hereditary fiefs, and all castes, from the highest to the lowest, were allotted their places in the scheme of national defence. Sivāji was assisted in his government by a council of eight, each member of which had definite duties, civil or military, allotted to him. The peasants' lands were carefully assessed, and a tax of about thirty-three per cent. was levied; in the case of foreign lands overrun by Marāthā troops, an officer was deputed to collect a tax of one-fourth the revenue, known as Chauth. The Deccan under Sivāji was far better governed than Bijāpur or the Imperial territories.

Sivāji died in 1680, at the age of fifty-three, leaving two sons, Sambhāji and Rājārām. He is described as short and slight, with long arms, an aquiline nose and a pointed beard. He had piercing eyes, and a frank, pleasing manner. He was a born leader, ruthless in war and a stern disciplinarian. No one on pain of death might bring a woman into camp. He was sincerely religious, and looked upon himself as inspired with a mission to be the deliverer of the country; he was devoted to his preceptor Rāmdās, by whose teaching he was guided. At one time, it is said, he laid his kingdom at the feet of his Guru and received it back as a 'gift of God', for which reason the national standard of the Marāthās was the orange-coloured robe of the ascetic. The nobility of Sivāji's character is exemplified by his conduct in the field. He studiously refrained from molesting the women and children of his opponents, and respected religious shrines. The historian Khāfi Khān, always ready to heap abuse upon his Hindu opponents, pays him a striking tribute:—

"He attacked the caravans which came from distant parts, and appropriated to himself the goods and the women. But he made it a rule, that wherever his followers went plundering they should do no harm to Mosques, the Book of God, or any one's women. Whenever a copy of the Holy Koran came into his hands, he treated it with respect, and gave it to some of his Mussalman followers. When the women of any Hindu





or Muhammadan were taken prisoners by his men, and they had no friend to protect them, he watched over them till their relations came to buy them their liberty. . . . He laid down a rule, that whenever a place was plundered, the goods of the poor people, copper money, and vessels of brass and copper, should belong to the man who found them; but other articles, gold and silver, coined or uncoined, gems, valuable stuffs and jewels, were not to belong to the finder, but were to be given without the smallest deduction to the officers, and to be by them paid over to Sivāji's government.'\*\*

Such an eulogy, coming from a bitter opponent, is doubly significant. Modern historians have pointed out that some at least of his actions were open to the charge of cruelty and even treachery; but all Marāthās regard him as their national hero. To-day, rapt audiences listen spellbound in far-away villages of the Deccan hills while the Gondālis or wandering bards tell the thrice-told tales of the murder of Afzal Khān, the taking of the Lion Fort, and other episodes of the war of liberation.

Sivāji's successor Sambhājī was a worthless and dissolute man. It has already been related in Chapter XIX how he was captured by Aurangzeb and put to death by torture, while his son Shāhu was sent to Delhi to be brought up as a Muslim nobleman. The Marāthā chiefs now elected his younger brother Rājārām as their king, and the struggle for freedom continued with unabated fierceness. Aurangzeb scored a great success by capturing Raigarh, the Marāthā stronghold, with all the government records and treasure. When Rājārām died in 1700, the war was carried on by his widow Tārābāi, an indomitable woman, to whose courage and tenacity the defeat of Aurangzeb was principally due.

The old Emperor passed away early in 1707, and his successors tried to solve the problem of the Deccan by sending back Shāhu to occupy the throne as a feudatory of the Mogul Empire. The return of Shāhu to the Deccan had the effect of throwing an apple of discord into the Marāthā midst. Shāhu's aunt Tārābāi coveted the throne for her own son, and the whole country was in a state of confusion. But Shāhu found assistance

\*Elliot and Dowson, VII, 305.





from an unexpected quarter in the person of a clever Brāhmin named Bālāji Visvānāth, who came from the Konkan, or country below the Ghauts. Shāhu, in gratitude, gave him the office of Peshwa or Prime Minister. One of Bālāji's first actions after restoring law and order was to obtain a decree from Delhi recognising his master as an independent ruler over all the districts owned by his grandfather Sivāji at the time of his death. Bālāji may be regarded as the second founder of the Marāthā Empire; Shāhu, a mild, pious man, was content to leave affairs of state to his minister, while he passed his time in hunting and fishing at his pleasant capital, Sātārā. The Marāthā nobles protested in vain against the growing power of the Brahmin; on his death in 1720, Shāhu invested his son Bājīrao with his father's robes of office. Bājīrao was an ambitious and far-seeing man, and conceived the bold plan of turning the tables upon the declining Mogul Empire and invading Hindustan. "Now is the time," he exclaimed, "to drive the strangers from the land of the Hindus! Let us strike at the trunk of the withering tree, and the branches will fall off themselves. By directing our efforts to Hindustan, the Marāthā flag shall fly from the Kistna to Attock." From that day, the faces of the Marāthās were turned northwards. Every Marāthā fortress has its 'Delhi gate.'

The next period was one of expansion. Marāthā soldiers of fortune carved out for themselves territories in Central India, and the Moguls were powerless to interfere. In this way arose the great states of Gwalior and Indore, ruled over by the houses of Sindia and Holkar, Baroda in Gujarāt, the seat of the Gaikwars, and many others. In 1739 the Marāthās descended on the Konkan, and took by storm the citadel of Bassein, the last Portuguese stronghold on that part of the coast. This brought them into uncomfortably close proximity to the English at Bombay. The island of Bombay had been acquired by Charles II as part of his wife's dowry from the Portuguese in 1660. It was let for a nominal rent to the East India Company, who, on account of its fine harbour, had transferred thither their headquarters from Surat, which had proved to be no longer safe from Marāthā raids.

On Bājīrao's death in 1740, Shāhu once more bestowed the



vacant office upon his son Bālāji Bājirao, and when he himself passed away nine years later, the Peshwa, by a clever *coup d'état*, seized the government. Henceforth the descendants of the House of Sivāji were mere *rois fainéants*, and the Mayors of the Palace transferred the seat of government to Poona. The only rival to the Marāthā power was the Nizam of Hyderabad, but his troops were no match for their agile opponents.

By 1758 the Marāthā power was at its zenith. Even in distant Calcutta, the 'Marāthā ditch' was built to keep out the dreaded horsemen. The chiefs of the Sindia and Holkar families had advanced as far as Delhi, where they were taking an active part in the intrigues which rent the unhappy capital, and eventually they occupied Lahore. This brought them into conflict with the Afghan ruler, Ahmad Shāh Durrāni, who invaded the Punjab and defeated the Sindias and Holkars with great slaughter. When this news reached the Peshwa, he fitted out an army under his cousin, the Bhao Sāheb, to march to Delhi and drive out the intruders. The nominal commander was the Peshwa's son Visvāsrao, a handsome boy of nineteen. As the troops moved slowly northwards, reinforcements poured in from every side. The expedition assumed the character of a national crusade. If the Marāthās were successful, a Hindu Empire would be restored at Delhi after over five centuries of Muslim rule. But the force presented a very different appearance from the hardy moss-troopers who had compassed the downfall of Aurangzeb, "like our ancient Britons", as a contemporary traveller puts it, "half-naked and as fierce." The great Sivāji had forbidden women to be brought into the camp, but now the Marāthā generals took the field in brilliant uniforms, accompanied by their wives and children, an immense horde of camp-followers and tents and baggage. The Bhao Sāheb placed especial reliance on a brigade of regular mercenary troops and artillery under Ibrāhīm Khān, who had been trained by the Marquis de Bussy, the Nizam's French General. Holkar, Sindia, and Suraj Mal, the Jāt chieftain, begged the Bhao Sāheb to place all his encumbrances in some strong fortress, and then to start operations in the traditional Marāthā fashion, by harassing the enemy's lines of communications. But the haughty Brahmin dismissed them with a sneer. "Who listens to the chatter of





"shepherds?" he exclaimed, with a contemptuous reference to Holkar's lowly origin. The Marāthā chiefs were deeply incensed. "If the Peshwa wins," they said, "he will annex our revenues, and compel us to wash his loin-cloths."

The Marāthās arrived outside Delhi in due course, and captured the capital without much difficulty. On October 19th, after celebrating the Dasara festival, which marks the end of the rains and the commencement of the campaigning season, they advanced to meet the Afghans, who were encamped about one hundred miles away, on the opposite bank of the Jumna. Unfortunately, the Bhao Sāheb allowed his opponents to cross the river and place themselves between him and his base. He then fell back upon the little town of Pānipat, where the fate of India has so often been decided. Here he dug himself in, and mounted his guns on the parapets, hoping that the Afghans would be tempted to attack him. But Ahmad Shāh Durrāni was too good a soldier to fall into the trap. The camp was closely invested, and soon the state of things in the vast host cooped up inside became almost indescribable. At last the chiefs came to the Bhao Sāheb and declared that the limit of endurance had been reached; they must either come out or starve. The next morning (January 13th, 1761), at dawn, the Marāthās issued forth and battle was joined. The conflict raged from dawn to midday with incredible fierceness, but early in the afternoon Visvāsrao was killed, and the Hindu army broke and fled. The fugitives were pursued to their entrenched camp, where they were butchered without mercy. Among the fallen was the Bhao Sāheb. A note couched in the enigmatic style of the day reached the Peshwa as he was advancing with a relief force. "Two pearls," it said, "have been dissolved, twenty-seven gold mohurs have been lost, and of silver and copper, the total cannot be counted up". Grief and consternation seized the whole Marāthā people as the news was received; every family had lost one or more of its members, and the Peshwa, returning to his capital, turned his face to the wall and died.

The Marāthā confederacy never wholly recovered from the defeat of Pānipat. The centre of power passed from the Peshwa to Māhādji Sindia, the able and far-sighted Marāthā chieftain whose capital was at Gwalior, but the mainstay of his army



consisted mainly of Arab and other mercenaries trained in Western fashion by European officers. Politically, the chief result of the battle was to pave the way for the English conquest; it is doubtful whether the Company's forces could otherwise have made any headway. At Poona a period of disputed successions, faction and intrigue supervened on the death of the fourth Peshwa in 1772. For a time, disaster was staved off by the astute policy of Nānā Farnavis, 'the Indian Machiavelli', who was in control for thirty-eight years. But with his death in 1800, as the British Resident observed, departed all the wisdom and moderation of the Marāthā government. The declining fortunes of the Marāthās can only be traced in the briefest detail. In 1802, by the Treaty of Bassein, the last Peshwa, Bājirao II, threatened by a coalition of his rivals, Sindia and Holkar, sacrificed his independence as the price of protection. He agreed to be restored to his throne by the East India Company, to pay a tribute of 26 lakhs of rupees, and to accept a British Resident and a subsidiary force at his capital of Poona. The arrangement did not last long. In November 1817 he tried to shake off his masters, but was defeated on the plain of Kirkee; a few months later he surrendered to the British cavalry, and was sent off to exile at Bithur near Cawnpore with a princely pension. The descendant of the house of Sivāji was restored to the throne of Sātārā as a British feudatory.

Meanwhile, the other members of the Marāthā confederacy had been also disposed of. Daulatrao Sindia, who had succeeded the great Māhādji in 1794, was defeated by Sir Arthur Wellesley at Assaye near Aurangābād in 1803. Holkar was driven out of Northern India by Lord Lake, and both chieftains were compelled to accept subordinate alliances with the British. The Nāgpur rājā, another great Marāthā chief, was defeated at the same time as the Peshwa and the greater part of his territory was annexed. Thus the last independent Hindu state succumbed to the advance of the all-conquering British arms.





## LEADING DATES

## THE SIKHS

A.D.

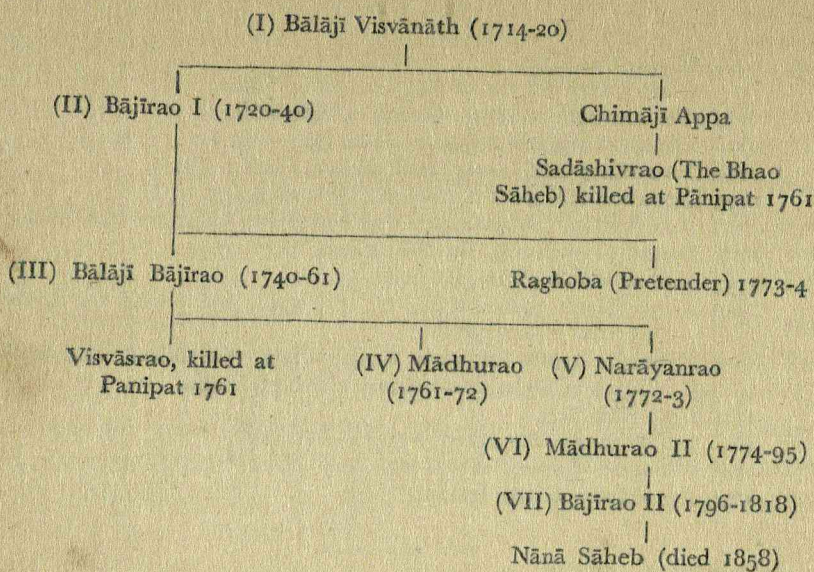
- 1469-1539 Nānak, first Guru.  
1577 Akbar grants the site of Amritsar to the Sikhs.  
1604 First compilation of the Granth or Sikh Bible.  
1606 Execution of Guru Arjun by Jahāngir.  
1606 Guru Hargobind forms the Sikhs into a brotherhood.  
1675 Execution of Guru Teg Bahādur by Aurangzeb.  
1675-1708 Guru Govind Singh, tenth and last Guru, organises the Khālṣa.  
1715 Execution of Banda, the 'false Guru.'  
1799 Rise of Mahārājā Ranjit Singh.  
1809 Ranjit Singh signs a treaty of 'perpetual amity' with the British (Treaty of Amritsar).  
1838-9 Tripartite treaty between Ranjit Singh, the British and Shāh Sūjah of Afghanistan. Death of Ranjit Singh.  
1845 First Sikh War.  
1846 Defeat of the Sikh army; treaty of Lahore.  
1848 Rising at Multan; Second Sikh War.  
1849 Annexation of the Punjab.

## THE MARĀTHĀS

- A.D. 1627 Birth of Sivājī.  
1646 Sivājī commences to capture the hill-forts round Poona.  
1659 Murder of Afzal Khān and defeat of Bijāpur army.  
1664 Sivājī loots Surat.  
1666 Sivājī goes to Agra.  
1674 Coronation of Sivājī.  
1676 Expedition to the Carnatic.  
1680 Death of Sivājī. Sambhājī succeeds.  
1689 Execution of Sambhājī. Rājārām succeeds.  
1700 Death of Rājārām.  
1707 Death of Aurangzeb.  
1708 Shāhu sent back to the Deccan.  
1714 Bālājī Visvānāth, first Peshwa.  
1720 Bajirao I, Peshwa.  
1737 Marāthās outside Delhi.  
1740 Bālājīrao Peshwā.  
1758 The Marāthās occupy the Punjab.  
1761 Defeat of the Marāthās at Pānīpat. Mādhurao Peshwa.  
1794 Death of Māhādījī Sindia.  
1796 Bājirao II, Peshwa.  
1800 Death of Nānā Farnavis.  
1802 Bājīrāo Peshwa signs the treaty of Bassein.  
1803 Sindia defeated by Wellesley at Assaye.  
1817 Last Marāthā War. Peshwa defeated at Kirkee.  
1818 Banishment of the Peshwa to Bithur. Annexation of the Deccan by the British and restoration of the Kingdom of Sātārā.  
1848 Annexation of Sātārā by the British.



THE PESHWAS OF POONA







## MODERN INDIA

THE British were only one of a number of European powers which tried to establish trading factories on the Indian coast. They had originally no thought of territorial conquest. In addition to their settlements at Surat and Bombay, the East India Company had been granted a site for a factory at Madras in 1639, and at Calcutta on the Hugli in 1690. The Portuguese, the pioneer European nation in the East, were already on the downgrade when the English arrived. The Dutch troubled themselves little about India: they had a factory at Surat, but their chief attention was focused upon the Spice Islands. The French were the latest comers. *La Compagnie des Indes* was formed in 1664, under the patronage of Louis XIV, and it acquired a settlement at Pondicherry on the Madras coast ten years later. A succession of wars were waged between the French and English for the control of Southern India in the eighteenth century. Both sides enlisted rival factions of the "country powers" to help them, and the success of the British was due, partly to the genius of Clive, but still more to the loss of the command of the sea by the French navy. The French never recovered from the capture of Pondicherry in 1761. Southern India passed under British control with the defeat of Tipu Sultan of Mysore in 1799. Meanwhile, the administration of Bengal had been ceded to Clive in 1765. The defeat of the last two independent Hindu powers, the Sikhs and the Marāthās, and the reduction of the remaining Indian rulers to the position of British feudatories, has already been described.

The condition of India in the 18th century was perhaps the unhappiest in the chequered history of the country. The break-up of the Mogul Empire caused widespread misery and disorder. The craftsmen who depended upon the Imperial Court lost their livelihood, and painting, architecture and the other arts declined. The gap was only partly filled by the growing demand for calico, printed cottons, silks, brocades and other goods for export to Europe, for the insecurity of the roads and of property in general





made trade a precarious matter. The Marāthās, who were the dominant power, were purely predatory. Other Indian rulers took a pride in settling the country they conquered, building roads, resthouses and temples, and digging wells. The Marāthās did nothing of the kind. Like a swarm of locusts, their horsemen swept down upon a district when the crops were ripe and demanded blackmail. If this were not forthcoming, the village headman was tortured. If this, too, proved unsuccessful, the village was plundered and fired and the crops destroyed. After the defeat of the Peshwa, Central India was filled with a number of masterless men, popularly known as Pindāris, who carried on the evil tradition. Contemporary accounts are full of the terror with which the Pindāris inspired the peasantry. Women would throw themselves and their children into wells at their approach. They dragged bags of hot ashes over people's faces to force them to give up their money, and carried off young girls trussed up like calves on the backs of their pack-animals. On the approach of regular troops, the Pindāris, on their swift ponies, vanished from the spot. In Southern India things were no better. From 1761 to 1799 the state of Mysore was in the hands of two Muslim soldiers of fortune, Hyder Ali and his son Tipu. Hyder Ali's invasion of the Carnatic in 1780 has been described in impassioned language by Burke: "A storm of universal fire blasted every field, consumed every house, destroyed every temple. The miserable inhabitants, fleeing from their flaming villages, in part were slaughtered; others, without regard to sex, to age, to the respect of rank or the sacredness of function—fathers torn from children, husbands from wives—enveloped in a whirlwind of cavalry, and amongst the goading spears of drivers and the trampling of pursuing horses were swept into captivity in an unknown and hostile land. Those who were unable to escape this tempest fled to the walled cities; but escaping from fire, sword and exile, they fell into the jaws of famine." Tipu was an eccentric genius, with much literary and artistic taste; his state was, by contemporary standards, well governed and even prosperous, but he was ferociously cruel, and the forcible conversion of the Hindu peasantry was practised wholesale. The Christian population of the Malabar coast was nearly exterminated. The condition of the common people under the rule





of the Nizam of Hyderabad was equally pitiable. A traveller describes a visit to a village where the people "were so far distracted with hunger, that many of them without distinction of sect devoured what was left by the European officer and sepoy from their dinner." Bengal under the East India Company, before the advent of the reforming genius of Warren Hastings, was little better off. "The dominions of Asia, like the distant Roman provinces during the decline of that Empire, had been abandoned, as lawful prey, to every species of speculators; insomuch that many servants of the Company, after exhibiting such scenes of barbarity as can scarcely be paralleled in the history of any country, returned to England loaded with wealth; where, intrenching themselves in borough or East India stock influence, they set justice at defiance, either in the cause of their country or oppressed innocence."\*

The earlier generation of officials of the East India Company were merchants, not administrators. They had come out to the East to make money, and it was only after prolonged efforts that Warren Hastings was able to sweep clean the Augean stables and turn chaos into something resembling order. Hastings returned to England in 1785, to stand trial at the hands of his ungrateful countrymen for the very abuses which he had endeavoured to put down. His successor, Lord Cornwallis, continued the work of Hastings in purifying the administration; amongst other acts, he introduced the famous Permanent Settlement of Bengal, by which the amount of revenue to be recovered from the peasant-proprietors was fixed in perpetuity, the money being paid through the Zemindars, or hereditary rent-collectors, who were regarded as the actual landowners. The wisdom of this arrangement has been often questioned, and it subsequently entailed a considerable loss of revenue to the State; but it had the merit of fixing the sum to be collected, and putting an end to the worst forms of extortion. In British India, with the gradual introduction of settled government and a regular system of administration, there was a slow but distinct improvement in the peasants' lot.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, only a fraction of the country was directly under British rule, and one

\*W. Bolts, *Considerations on Indian Affairs*, Preface, (1772).





of the most potent causes of misgovernment was the system of what were known as Subsidiary Alliances inaugurated by Cornwallis's successor, the Marquess of Wellesley (1798-1805). The Directors of the East India Company were averse from a policy of conquest, except where it was forced upon them, and, where possible, Indian princes were left in nominal control, their armies being replaced by British troops, who maintained them on their thrones. The result of the divorce between power and responsibility was disastrous. "The native prince, being guaranteed in the possession of his dominions but deprived of so many of the essential attributes of sovereignty, sinks in esteem and loses that stimulus to good government which is supplied by the fear of rebellion and deposition. He becomes a *roi fainéant*, a sensualist, an extortionate miser, or careless and lax ruler, which is equivalent in the East to an anarchist. The higher classes, coerced by external ascendancy, in turn lose their self-respect and degenerate like their master; the people groan under a complicated system of repression which is irremediable." The principal states thus brought under control were Hyderabad and Oudh. The Nizam of Hyderabad maintained a strong force commanded by French officers; troops were sent in 1799 to disarm and disband them, and the territory known as the Berārs was ceded in order to pay for the expenses of the army of occupation. The 'King of Oudh', as he was sometimes called, was coerced into a subsidiary alliance in 1801. The scenes enacted at the Court of Lucknow under its subsequent rulers surpass description. Lucknow during the first half of the nineteenth century, with its buffoons and parasites, its out-at-heels European adventurers, its troupes of dancing-girls and its indescribable orgies, resembled a page from the Arabian Nights. This was the state of things which presented itself to Dalhousie, the greatest of the Governors General under the Company, when he arrived in India in 1848. Dalhousie was filled with the reformer's desire to sweep away abuses and among the foremost were the incurable Indian States. In some cases the method adopted was what was known as the Doctrine of Lapse. Few Indian rulers begot heirs of the body, and the permission to adopt was subject to the consent of the Paramount Power. In most cases this was refused, and the state in question





lapsed to the British government. In this manner the Marāthā states of Sātārā, Nāgpur and Jhānsi lapsed to the Company, and the pension paid to the last Peshwa was discontinued in the case of his adopted son Dondhu Pant, afterwards notorious as the Nānā Sāheb. Oudh, after repeated warnings which passed unheeded, was annexed in 1856. There is no doubt, however, that Dalhousie's imperious policy, however beneficial in itself, was the predisposing cause of the Indian Mutiny. Orthodox people, Hindu and Mussalman alike, were uneasy at innovations such as railways and telegraphs, and at the teaching of Christian missionaries, which appeared to threaten caste, to lead astray the rising generation, and to undermine the very foundation of their ancient creeds. The abolition of Suttee and of the right of adoption seemed to show that no custom, however cherished, was safe. The English legal code, with its complications that no one save the lawyers understood, was universally feared and hated, and its introduction was intensely unpopular.

Muhammadans were, perhaps even more than Hindus, disquieted by the recent trend of events. The establishment of English rule meant the separation of Church and State, which was in itself repugnant to Islamic teaching, and with it came the substitution of the vernaculars, and even of English, for Persian, the classical language of their community. The annexation of Oudh, the last of the great independent Muslim states in the North, outraged Muhammadan sentiment. The Tālukdārs of Oudh, the hereditary landholders, were deprived of many of their rights and liberties, and as Oudh was the recruiting-ground for the Bengal Army, this fomented widespread discontent among the Bengal regiments. Feudal loyalty in India is very strong, and Hindus resented the discontinuation of the Peshwa's pension and the annexation of the Marāthā States as much as Muhammadans did the seizure of Oudh. Numbers of persons lost the positions which they had enjoyed at the native courts; there was now little left for an Indian, however able and ambitious, but a subordinate post under a none too sympathetic European official. Henry Lawrence and William Sleeman, both men with almost unparalleled knowledge of the Indian character, were fully alive to the dangers of the situation. Lawrence warned Dalhousie, but in



vain. Writing to his wife in 1856, on the eve of the outbreak he had foreseen, and which was destined to cost him his life, he said: "We measure too much by English rules, and expect, contrary to all experience, that the energetic and aspiring, even where we are notorious imbeciles, should like our arrogating to ourselves all authority and all emoluments. Until we treat natives, and especially soldiers, as having much the same ambitions and the same feelings as ourselves, we shall never be safe."\* Sleeman was even more emphatic. "We have only that right to interpose in order to secure for the suffering people that better government which their sovereign pledged himself to secure for them but failed. . . . The Native States I consider to be breakwaters, and when they are all swept away we shall be at the mercy of our native army, which may not be always under control."†

The episode of the greased cartridges served as a match to ignite the powder-barrel. On May 10th, 1857, the Bengal regiments at Meerut mutinied, and having killed their officers, rode off to Delhi and proclaimed the Emperor. The Government was caught unawares; the great arsenals at Delhi and Allahābād fell into the hands of the mutineers, and soon all the garrison-towns from Ambāla to Benares were ablaze. The massacres of non-combatants at Delhi and Cawnpore provoked stern reprisals. The garrison at Lucknow was besieged in the Residency, and not relieved till November. All the available resources were concentrated on the capture of Delhi, the rebel stronghold, and when it was taken by storm on September 14th, the back of the mutiny was broken. Meanwhile, what was really a separate rebellion, with the object of reinstating the Peshwa, had been started by the Rānī of Jhansi, the widow of one of the Marāthā chiefs whose state had lapsed. She seized Gwalior, but was finally defeated by a contingent from Bombay, and died fighting at the head of her troops. Her principal lieutenant, Tantia Topi, was caught and hanged; Nānā Sāheb fled to the jungles of Nepal, and was never heard of again. The Emperor was deposed and banished to Rangoon, and on November 1st 1858, the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to the Crown was

\**Honoria Lawrence*, by Maud Diver, p. 471.

†*A Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh in 1849-1850* (1858 edn.) II, 393.





announced at Allahābād. Queen Victoria's proclamation, issued at the time, was a remarkable document; it announced a general amnesty, guaranteed the Indian princes against further encroachments, promised complete religious freedom, and reiterated that public offices should be thrown open to all, irrespective of race or creed.

The Mutiny was not a national movement. To call it a War of Independence is a misnomer. The mutineers were divided in their aims: their foremost leader, the Rānī of Jhānsi, was fighting for the restoration of the Marāthā Rāj, while the Muhammadan soldiery aimed at the resuscitation of the Empire of Delhi. The princes who had escaped Dalhousie's axe remained loyal. The Nizam of Hyderabad, whose defection might well have meant the loss of India, cast in his lot with the British. Most important of all, the Sikhs, oblivious of the fact that eight years before they had been defeated with slaughter, cheerfully joined the side of their new masters, and marched to the siege of the Mogul capital. The Indian peasant knows little and cares less who are his rulers. *Dilli dur ast*—'It's a far cry to Delhi.' All he demands is justice, light taxation and non-interference, and outside Oudh there was no popular rising in support of the rebels. Afghanistan remained neutral, and Nepal sent her Gurkha troops to support the English. The Mutiny was a painful episode, but it swept the sky clear of many clouds. It was the revolt of the old against the new, and was bound to come sooner or later. It abolished a pampered and ill-disciplined army and an out-of-date and unprogressive system of administration, and paved the way for the introduction of a uniform system of government, which provided security of tenure, regular taxation, protection of life and property and equal justice to high and low throughout the country.\* How great these blessings were may be gathered from the study of Indian history of the preceding century and a half.

#### SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

One of the first acts of Warren Hastings in order to establish a system of government in Bengal in consonance with the tradi-

\*V. A. Smith, *Oxford History of India*, p. 725, quoting Sir Lepel Griffin.





tions of the people, was to institute an enquiry into the ancient language and literature and the legal system of the Hindus. In this he was following the precedent of enlightened princes like Akbar and Dārā Shikoh, who had caused Persian translations of the Hindu scriptures to be made. The result was that European scholars were encouraged to take up the study of Sanskrit. In 1785 Charles Wilkins published a translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and five years later, Sir William Jones translated Kālidāsa's great drama, *Sakuntalā*. In 1802 an Englishman named William Hamilton, who was detained in France owing to the Napoleonic Wars, beguiled his time by teaching Sanskrit to his fellow-prisoners. Among them was the German poet William Schlegel. The effect upon Europe of the discovery of Sanskrit literature and philosophy was electrifying, and may not unfairly be compared to the discovery of Greek at the Renaissance. To Schopenhauer, the Upanishads came as a new Gnosis or revelation. "That incomparable book," he exclaimed, "stirs the spirit to the very depths of my soul. . . . In the whole world there is no study, except that of the original, so beneficial and exhilarating. It has been the solace of my life: it will be the solace of my death!" Goethe's verse in praise of *Sakuntalā* is well-known:

Would'st thou the young year's blossoms, and the fruits of  
its decline,

And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted,  
fed,

Would'st thou the earth or Heaven itself in one sole name  
combine?

I name thee, O *Sakuntalā*! and all at once is said.

Indian thought deeply influenced the German transcendentalists and, through them, Coleridge, Carlyle, Emerson, and the other pioneers of the Romantic Movement in England and America.

India benefited in her turn by contact with European minds. The application of western methods of study to Oriental literature had an intensely stimulating effect. The Vedas were no longer part of a mysterious ritual, the very meaning of which was forgotten, but living works, to be interpreted and studied





like the Greek and Latin classics. Until the coming of the British, the history of the pre-Muhammadan period in India did not exist, and the very name of the great Emperor Asoka was forgotten. But in 1834 James Prinsep discovered the clue to the Brāhmi and Kharoshthi alphabets, and this enabled him to undertake the reading of the ancient Hindu inscriptions. Since then generations of scholars—Indian and European—have been engaged in the laborious task of reconstructing, line upon line, the early history of India. Buddhism as well as Hinduism has been investigated, and now the western world can read in reliable translations the authentic words of the greatest of India's religious teachers. The early European visitors to India were often excellent connoisseurs of Indian art, and brought home to England collections of Mogul and Hindu pictures. One of the most important is that made by Mr. R. Johnson, the banker of Warren Hastings; which is now in the India Office.

The earlier Englishmen in India adapted themselves to the customs and habits of the country. Colonel Kirkpatrick, Resident at Hyderabad, "married a Muslim lady of rank, spoke Persian like a gentleman, and in manners and costume could hardly be distinguished from a Muslim noble." The "nabobs", as the Anglo-Indians were familiarly called in the eighteenth century, were thoroughly Oriental in their outlook, with their queer Eastern habits, their hookahs and curries and native servants, and above all their inexplicable habit of taking a daily bath. Thackeray has immortalised the Civil Servant of the old type in Jos Sedley. It was part of the Company's policy not to interfere with the religion or customs of the people. The money spent on education was devoted to the encouragement of the indigenous learning of the country. Warren Hastings endowed a Madrasah or Muhammadan College at Calcutta: Jonathan Duncan, the 'Brahmanised Englishman', founded at Benares, where he was Resident, a Hindu College for teaching Sanskrit. Customs such as suttee, infanticide, and slavery were tolerated. Government acted as trustees for temples; they derived a handsome income from the pilgrim-tax, and Indian regiments formed guards of honour and fired salutes at Hindu religious processions. Protestant missionaries were not admitted into British India, though a small body established itself





at the Danish colony of Serampore near Calcutta outside the Company's jurisdiction. In the South, Catholics had in many instances adopted the prevailing attitude towards Hinduism. The Jesuit Robert de Nobili and his followers adopted the saffron robe and sacred thread of the Brahmins, lived on vegetarian food, and studied Sanskrit; they allowed their converts to retain the caste-system, and the Pariahs had separate arrangements made for them in their churches. Father Beschi, another Jesuit, wrote a Christian poem in Tamil which has become a classic. The Abbé Dubois vividly describes a Christian religious procession in the eighteenth century. "Accompanied with hundreds of tom-toms, trumpets and all the discordant music of the country; with numberless torches and fire-works; the statue of the saint placed on a car which is charged with garlands of flowers and other gaudy ornaments according to the taste of the country—the car slowly dragged along by a multitude shouting all along the march—the congregation surrounding the car all in confusion, several among them dancing or playing with small sticks or native swords; some wrestling, some playing the fool; all shouting or conversing with each other, without anyone exhibiting the least sign of respect or devotion."

But with the beginning of the nineteenth century, a change set in. In 1813, when the Company's Charter was renewed, a sum of £10,000 was ear-marked for "the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of British territories in India." A demand for western education was rapidly growing up among better class Indians who had come into contact with Europeans. This was encouraged by the Baptist mission at Serampore. The missionaries started a printing-press, and gave a great impetus to the vernaculars by printing the first Bengali newspaper in 1818, and translations of the Bible in Bengali, Tamil and Marāthī. Numerous institutions to promote western literature and science sprang up in Calcutta; the first was the Hindu College, afterwards the Presidency College, founded in 1816. Four years later the Bishop's College was established.

In 1825, Lord William Bentinck, the most enlightened of the





Governors General, arrived in India. A bitter controversy had been raging for some time whether the sum of money to be devoted to education was to be spent on subsidising the traditional institutions of the country, the old *tal* and *math* and madrasahs, or upon western learning. The demand for the latter was becoming more and more pressing, especially as, by the provisions of the renewed Charter of 1833, Indians were to be admitted to the higher branches of the civil service. The matter was finally clinched by Thomas Babington Macaulay, who had come out to India as Bentinck's Law Member. Macaulay ridiculed the venerable literature of the Hindus as "false history, false astronomy, false metaphysics, which attended their false religion," and concluded by pointing out that "the languages of Western Europe civilised Russia; I cannot doubt they will do for the Hindu what they have done for the Tartar." However much we may deplore the tone of Macaulay's minute, there is no doubt that the change was inevitable. It certainly convinced the other members of the Governor General's Council, and Lord Bentinck issued his famous resolution that "all the funds appropriated for education would be best employed on English education alone."

The pioneer in the changes which have revolutionised modern India was undoubtedly Rām Mohun Roy. He was born in 1772 and belonged to a good Brahmin family, whose members had held office for generations under the Muhammadan rulers. His parents were orthodox Hindus, and he was married while he was still a child. He studied Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit while at school, and when he was about twenty, he learnt English and started to read the Bible. Not satisfied with a translation, he acquired enough Hebrew and Greek to study the original. In 1804, disgusted with the corruption of the Hindu religion practised around him, he wrote a pamphlet in Persian denouncing idolatry. In 1811, his desire for reform was brought to a point by witnessing the immolation of his sister-in-law on her husband's funeral pyre; this terrible sight altered his whole life, and soon after, he gave up a lucrative government appointment to devote himself to the religious and social betterment of his countrymen. He found in the Vedas and the Upanishads a pure and noble creed which had long been overlaid with superstition and idol-worship. Still



higher teaching, however, he discovered in the first three Gospels and in 1820, he published a remarkable book entitled *The Precepts of Jesus, The Guide to Peace and Happiness*. It recorded the moral precepts of Jesus Christ in the words of the Gospels, but explicitly omitted all mention of miracles or of Christ's Divinity. This deeply offended the Serampore missionaries, hitherto friendly to him, but gained him friends in David Hare, a Unitarian watchmaker, and William Adam, both devoted to the cause of bringing western enlightenment to India. Orthodox Hindus were deeply suspicious of the new education and Mussalmans stood entirely aloof. Rām Mohun Roy's courageous and outspoken views "raised such a feeling against him, that at the last he was deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends." He addressed a remarkable letter on the subject to the Governor General, Lord Amherst, in which he asserted that "if it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the Schoolmen, which was best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner, the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance, if such had been the policy of the British Legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened policy of instruction."

In 1828, Rām Mohun Roy brought to fruition one of the great objects of his life, the establishment of the Brahma Samāj, a Church open to all sorts and conditions of men for "the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immortal Being Who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe." The offering of sacrifices, the taking of life, and the use of any kind of image, painting or portrait were forbidden. In the following year, Lord Bentinck, supported by Rām Mohun Roy, took the courageous step, in the face of his more conservative advisers, of declaring Suttee illegal; those aiding and abetting it were liable to be prosecuted for murder. Other cruel practises, the murder of female babies at birth, and thuggee, the ritual strangling of travellers by assassins who were devotees of the goddess Kālī, were also suppressed. The Hindu College and other institutions





imparting English education were now in full swing, and Rām Mohun Roy proceeded to do what was then practically unheard-of for a high-caste Hindu. He accepted an invitation from the Emperor of Delhi to go to England in order to represent certain grievances to the Board of Directors. Rām Mohun's English visit was an unqualified success. He was given a banquet by the Directors; he was presented to King William IV and was accorded a seat of honour at the Coronation; he was a constant visitor at the House of Commons, and heard the debates on the Reform Bill, the Factory Act and the Act for the abolition of Slavery. He impressed on the Court of Directors the necessity of codifying the Indian criminal code, substituting English for Persian as the official language, and admitting Indians to the highest posts, freely and impartially, without distinction of race, religion or colour. The momentous Charter Act of 1833, which put an end to the commercial character of the Company, was largely due to his inspiration. Soon after it was passed, he died at Bristol at the age of sixty-one.

Rām Mohun Roy was the greatest Indian of his age. He was indeed the prophet of the new India. It is untrue to say that he wished to denationalise his country. He was a fine Oriental scholar, and deeply read in Persian and Sanskrit. But he recognised, years before any of his countrymen, that the education which had been fostered by the pandits and maulvis was too vague and unpractical to influence the people at large; western knowledge would not only enable India to fight against the abuses and corruptions which disfigured her social life, but would lead to a truer understanding of her own immemorial culture.

The Brahma Samāj received considerable development from its third leader, Keshab Chandra Sen. A reformed church arose, which, while mainly Hindu in its outlook, anticipated the more modern Theosophical movement in recognising the inspiration of the Scriptures of all creeds. The Samāj movement has done an immense amount of good in Bengal, in purifying the popular religion, putting down social evils like child-marriage, developing the vernacular and popularising education. Nearly all the leading writers and thinkers of Bengal in the last century have been Samajists, and many of them have come from the





.Tagore family, which has produced a galaxy of philosophers, artists, musicians, dramatists and poets. The best known is Rabindranāth, born in 1861, whose *Gītānjali*, or Handful of Songs, published just before the War, gained for him the Nobel Prize, and an international reputation enjoyed by no other Indian writer. His poems breathe the passionate love of God which is familiar to students of Kabīr and Chaitanya:—

Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou  
hast come down to me.

O thou Lord of all heavens,  
Where would be thy love if I were not?

Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth.  
In my heart is the endless play of thy delight.  
In my life thy will is ever taking shape.

And for this, thou who art King of kings hast decked thyself  
in beauty to captivate my heart.

And for this thy love loses itself in the love of thy lover,  
And there art thou seen in the perfect union of the two.\*

Rabindranāth Tagore combines in his person the old and the new, and his work is the product of the union of Eastern and Western culture to a unique degree. He is an ardent lover of his country, and mourns for her lost greatness, but he recognises her indebtedness to the West. "It is only by knowing the Europe that is great and good that we can effectively guard ourselves against the Europe that is base and greedy." He has a deep desire for union with God; but union comes not from Yoga and asceticism, but from mixing in the world and helping others. "God is the great playfellow who creates flowers of beauty for His children, and death is a momentary interruption of the *līlā*".† At Bolpur, Rabindranāth Tagore has established a school where the teaching is carried out in the traditional Indian manner. The pupils study beneath

\**Gītānjali*, p. 32.

†E. J. Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 100. *Līlā* is the 'Sport' of the Creator with His creatures.





trees in the open air; they are responsible for their own discipline, and they begin and end the day with prayers to "the Deity who is in fire and water, nay, who pervades the universe through and through, and makes His abode in tiny plants and towering forests."\*

The Samāj movement spread to Bombay, where the Prārthanā Samāj or Society of Prayer was inaugurated. As in Bengal, its followers tried to evolve a pure and simple theism, purged of idolatry and superstition and evil social customs. Its members abjured child-marriage and caste restrictions. The most enlightened writers and politicians of Western India, Ramkrishna Bhandarkar, M. G. Ranade and G. K. Gokhale, supported it, and from it sprang the Society of the Servants of India, which has taken a leading part in promoting educational and social reform.

The Brahma movement was regarded by pious Hindus as unduly rationalistic in its outlook, and it led to a number of attempts to purify orthodox Hinduism. The most remarkable of these reformers was Dayanand Sārasvati, who was born in Kāthiāwār in 1824. In his autobiography he describes his conversion. He was keeping vigil as part of the ceremony of initiation in the temple of Siva, when doubts suddenly assailed him. "I feel it impossible," he told his father, "to reconcile the idea of an omnipotent, living God, with this idol, which allows the mice to run upon its body, and thus suffers its image to be polluted on the slightest provocation." After this, like the Buddha, he wandered about India as a mendicant ascetic, seeking the truth. He practised Yoga, but found it a fraud. In 1860, however, he met his Master, a blind Brahmin, who instructed him in the Vedas. After a further period of study, Dayānand started his public career in 1868, and founded the Ārya Samāj. Like Luther, Dayānand aimed at stripping religion of all its later accretions, and going back to the primeval simplicity of the Vedic hymns and Upanishads. The Vedas are the source, not only of all religious truth, but moreover, of all knowledge. They contain implicitly everything worth knowing, even the most recent inventions of modern science, steam-engines, railways and aeroplanes. Dayānand threw

\*E. J. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 97.





open the study of the Vedas to both men and women, regardless of caste; idolatry is forbidden, but members of the Ārya Samāj believe in Karmā and rebirth. The Ārya Samāj has many followers in the Punjab, and maintains a College in Lahore. The Ārya Samāj represents militant Hinduism; it adapts a polemical attitude towards Christianity and Islam, and vigorously condemns cow-killing.\*

An equally interesting personality is Rāmkrishna Paramahansa, who was born near Hooghly in Bengal in 1834. He was a Brahmin by caste, but in 1871, when he forsook the world and donned the ascetics' robes, he worked in a temple as a scavenger, performing the most menial offices and joining in the meals of outcasts. At one time he shared the humble abode of a Muhammadan fakir. He had visions of Krishna and Jesus, and came to the conclusion that all creeds are only facets of the same Truth. "Every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Muhammadan should follow Muhammadanism. For Hindus, the ancient path, the path of the Aryan Rishis, is the best." Rām Mohun appealed to the head, Rāmkrishna to the heart. The saintliness of his life and the simplicity of his teaching won him a large following. Among these was Swāmi Vivekānanda, a highly educated man, and a staunch defender of Hinduism. To him, everything in Hinduism is right; the West is degraded and materialistic. His creed was based on the Vedānta, and was an attempt to graft Hindu beliefs on modern thought. He was a powerful orator, and in 1893, when he attended the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he created a profound impression. He made numbers of American converts, and in San Francisco is a picturesque Hindu temple, the headquarters of the Rāmkrishna Mission. One of his European followers was Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita), whose charming work, *The Web of Indian Life*, presents a highly idealised view of the Hindu religion.

One result of these movements was to check the conversion of the educated classes to Christianity which seemed almost inevitable in Macaulay's time. Another was to encourage the growth of the Indian vernaculars. When Macaulay advocated the

\*Max Müller, *Biographical Essays*, p. 170. J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (1915), p. 101.





Adoption of English for purposes of higher education, the choice lay between it and Sanskrit or Persian. Sanskrit, like Latin in medieval Europe, was the *lingua franca* of the learned. Educated men regarded the vernaculars, as a literary medium, with contempt. Thanks first to the Christian missionaries and then to the various Hindu reformers, the various Indian vernaculars have now developed an extensive prose literature.

At first, in their desire to enlarge the vocabulary, Sanskrit words were freely introduced, and early vernacular prose literature was as alien from the language of the people as, say, Dr. Johnson's English from the common English speech of his day. But now there is a return to a simpler and less affected style. Almost all the vernaculars have now a flourishing literature. The chief literary forms are the novel, the essay, the drama and lyric poetry. The novelists and dramatists usually select as their themes the glories of India's past and social reform. Several of the early novelists—Bankim Chandra Chatterji in Bengal, Nanda Shankar in Gujarāt, Hari Narāyan Āpte in the Deccan and others, were imitators of Sir Walter Scott. The modern vernacular drama, in Marāthī, Gujarāthi and Bengali, is chiefly a comedy of manners. Social reform, caste, the lot of the widow, and the anomalies rising from the clash of East and West, are the usual themes, treated often with an almost Shavian humour.

We must now turn to the Muhammadans. Urdu, the Muhammadan *lingua franca*, flourished chiefly at the courts of the local rulers, and was considerably developed in the eighteenth century, after the downfall of the Mogul Empire. In the Mogul Court, which was essentially foreign, Persian was alone patronised, but now people began to realise the absurdity of writing one language and speaking another. The Nawabs of Oudh were great patrons of Urdu poetry, and it is claimed that the purest Urdu is still spoken at Lucknow. With the coming of the English, the need for prose literature in Urdu as in other Indian languages was felt. In 1800 a College was founded at Fort William in Calcutta for training the cadets who came out to the Company's service; its learned Principal, Dr. J. B. Gilchrist, found that it was necessary to translate books into Urdu, and for this purpose a number of learned Indian scholars were employed. From translation, the



Fort William writers went on to original prose works; the chief difficulty was to persuade them to adopt a simple style and avoid Persian embellishments. After the Mutiny, the Muhammadan community remained in a state of deep depression; less adaptable and more conservative than the Hindus, they were outstripped by their more nimble-witted competitors, and this led to a recrudescence of the latent bitterness always subsisting between the two communities. From this parlous condition they were retrieved chiefly by the work of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān, the great Muslim reformer who did for his co-religionists what Rām Mohun Roy had done for the Hindus. Sir Sayyid was a pioneer of simple Urdu; he was indefatigable in his efforts to bring modern knowledge to his fellow-countrymen by means of magazines, books, societies and schools. In 1869, at the age of fifty-two, he visited England and met Thomas Carlyle and other famous people. His liberal views on religious and social matters earned him the hatred of the orthodox, and at one time his life was in danger; but in 1877 he realised the dream of his life in the foundation of the Muhammadan College at Aligarh, now the Muslim University. To-day, the most distinguished Muhammadan writer is Sir Muhammad Iqbal, poet and mystic. His *Secrets of the Self*, published in 1915, created a great stir. Iqbal was greeted as a Messiah who stirred the dead bones of Islam to fresh life. The Osmania University in Hyderabad State, under the patronage of H.H. the Nizam, employs Urdu as its language. Hyderabad, the premier Indian State, is now the leading centre of Urdu culture.

English, however, is the medium in which educated men and women from different parts of India communicate with one another; it is the language of the courts, the universities and the press. Toru Dutt in the past generation, and Sarojini Naidu in the present, have written English verse of great charm and distinction. With the nationalist revival has come a revulsion in favour of Hindi as a *lingua franca*, but this can never serve for Dravidian India. Indians have won for themselves a place among the world's scientists: Sir Jagadish Bose in botany, Sir P. C. Roy in chemistry, and Sir C. V. Raman in physics have secure niches in the temple of Fame. Indian statesmen have taken a large part in the political movements of the day. Of the past generation,





perhaps the most distinguished was G. K. Gokhale; the most inspiring figure of to-day is Mr. M. K. Gandhi. The Mahātmā, as he is affectionately called, combines India's traditional asceticism with a very modern outlook. Deeply imbued with the teachings of Tolstoi, Ruskin and the Sermon on the Mount, he believes that the remedy for the social and political evils of to-day lies in simplification. He has told India to abandon her mills and railways and other capitalistic machinery and return to the spinning-wheel. He has imported into politics the old principle of *ahimsā* or non-violence, stressed by Asoka 2,000 years ago. Mr. Gandhi's great hold on the peasant is partly due to his power of writing plain, unadorned, nervous Gujarāthi; he is one of the great masters of prose in his own tongue as in English, and his recent autobiography is a classic of its kind.

One of the most helpful signs of to-day is the revival of interest in Indian art. The old traditional arts and crafts of India have never died; masons and sculptors may be found to-day in the Indian States, who work according to the rules laid down in the ancient manuals. Lord Curzon's zeal for the preservation of historic monuments of the country did much to rescue them from the oblivion into which they had fallen; but educated India had almost forgotten her ancient heritage in these matters, until two notable pioneers, E. B. Havell and Ananda Coomaraswamy, succeeded in arousing the national conscience. A school of painting has arisen in Bengal, chiefly under the inspiration of Abanindro Nāth Tagore and his followers Nanda Lāl Bose and Surendra Nāth Ganguly, which has inaugurated a new era. Their work, which draws its inspiration from Ajanta, has not the strength or vigour of the old indigenous schools, but has great charm and grace. The Bombay school, on the other hand, seeks to free itself from the shackles of tradition, and to apply modern methods to express Indian themes.

At present India stands on the threshold of a new era. Political and social changes have followed in bewildering succession. The nationalist movement has created a revulsion against the indiscriminate imitation of the West which was the fashion in the Victorian era. When, however, occidental influence has been assimilated, we may look forward to the emergence of a new





eclectic culture combining what is best in both; the future of India, in art and literature, seems to lie in the amalgamation of Western thought with her own immemorial civilisation.

CSL





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