

Prominent Features of Jahangir's Rule

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Jahangir whose original name was Salim, became the emperor of Delhi after the death of his father emperor Akbar.

After his coronation, he assumed the title of Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir Badshah Ghazi.

Important features of his reign are as under:

First, Jahangir is perhaps the only ruler who although ruled for about 22 years but for about 16 years he was only a ruler in name only as during this period, his wife Nur Jahan was the virtual ruler.

Second, he is famous for his 'golden chain of justice'.

Third, his twelve orders issued in the early period of his reign showed his great concern for the welfare of his subjects.

Fourth, long drawn war between Mewar and the Mughals came to an end.

Fifth, relations between the Mughal rulers and the Sikhs began to deteriorate.

Sixth, two visitors namely Captain W.Cook and Sir Thomas Rao came to the court of Jahangir. The latter who was the ambassador of King James was able to get permission from Jahangir allowing the English to trade at Surat. With the passage of time, trade was followed by rule of the English over India.

Main events of the reign of Jahangir:

1. Chain of justice:

The earliest measure of Jahangir was that a golden chain having 60 bells and weighing several 'maunds' was fastened between the Shahburj of Agra fort and a stone pillar raised on the banks of river Jamuna. People seeking justice were required to pull this chain in order to put forth their complaints or petitions to the King. This act speaks very high of Jahangir's sense of justice but to what extent it proved helpful is not clearly known.

2. Issuance of 12 rules of conduct ('Dastur-ul-Amal'):

Jahangir issued the following orders which demonstrate his concern for the welfare of the people:

- (1) He abolished the 'Tagma' and "meerwahi" toll taxes and the taxes that the Subedars imposed on the people for their expenses.
- (2) He ordered for the construction of mosques, sarais, and wells on the road-sides which reduced the dangers from the thieves and dacoits.
- (3) He ordered that the property of the dead would be passed over to their legal heirs and the unclaimed property would go to the state, the income of which would be spent on public-welfare.
- (4) He banned the manufacture and sale of the intoxicants although he himself was addicted to drinking.
- (5) He disallowed the mutilation of the limbs of the criminals.
- (6) He ordered that the land-lords would not forcibly occupy the lands of the farmers.
- (7) He ordered for the construction of government hospitals and appointed the physicians (hakims) in them.
- (8) Animal slaughter was banned on two days in the week i.e. Thursday, his Coronation day, and Sunday, the day of his father and on certain other occasions in the year.
- (9) Akbar held Sunday with respect because it was the day of the sun. So Jahangir did like-wise.
- (10) He reinstated all the mansabdars, appointed during Akbar's reign, in their positions and promoted them on merit.
- (11) The Jagirs, known as Aima and Madadgar, granted to the religious and charitable institutions were allowed to remain with them.
- (12) All the convicts, serving for longer periods, were released from the jails.

Revolt of prince Khusro:

In 1606, Jahangir's eldest son and an aspirant of the throne revolted but was defeated. It is said that after his arrest, he was poisoned to death.

Execution of Guru Arjun Dev (1606):

Two reasons are attributed to Jahangir's conflict with the 5th Sikh Guru Arjun Dev. One, it is said that the Sikh guru helped prince Khusro against the emperor. Second, Guru Arjun Dev was becoming popular and promoting the creed of Sikhism.

The execution of the Guru greatly provoked the Sikhs and they began to prepare themselves to wreak vengeance upon the Mughals, They declared their Guru a 'martyr'.

Marriage with Nur Jahan (1611):

Nur Jahan's marriage with Jahangir almost eclipsed his personality. Jahangir in his biography 'Tuzuk-i-Jahangir' himself wrote about his influence, "I have sold my kingdom to my beloved queen for a cup of wine and a dish of soup."

Treaty with Mewar (1615):

Jahangir and Rana Amar Singh, son of Rana Pratap saw several ups and. downs in the struggle which continued for about 10 years. In 1615 both signed a peace treaty. The treaty reflected statesmanship of Jahangir.

Following were important terms of the treaty:

1. The Rana accepted the suzerainty of the Mughal emperor.
2. The Rana was not asked to enter into matrimonial relations with the emperor and he, in place of himself, sent his son, prince Karan to the Mughul service at the court.
3. Jahangir restored all territory of Mewar including the fort of Chittor to the Rana on condition that the fort would not be repaired.

About the treaty, Dr. Ishwari has observed, "Jahangir's conduct in this affair is wholly worthy of praise. Mewar had given the Mughals no small amount of trouble but the emperor forgot the past and adopted a conciliatory policy in dealing with the Rana."

Jahangir and South India:

Jahangir's repeated attempts to conquer south India were without substantial gains.

Conquest of Kangra (1619):

After prolonged and terrible warfare of 14 months Kangra was conquered.

Loss of Kandhar (1621):

Jahangir lost Kandhar.

Revolt of prince Khurram (1622):

Prince Khurram (later on Shah Jahan) was asked by Jahangir to crush a revolt in Kandhar but he refused fearing that Nur Jahan might create difficulties for him in his absence from India. His revolt failed and he begged pardon.

Revolt of Mahabat Khan (1622):

He was an able commander. He came into prominence when he suppressed the revolt of Khurram. He was, however, considered a powerful opponent by Nur Jahan who wanted to have her way. Mahabat Khan felt humiliated by her treatment. He revolted but had to seek pardon. Emperor Jahangir pardoned him keeping his past services in view.

An estimate of Jahangir:

Observations made by the two historians namely, Dr. Ishwari Prasad and Dr. Beni Prasad provide us valuable information and insight about Jahangir's personality and character.

Dr. Ishwari Prasad writes, "Jahangir is one of the most interesting figures in Mughul history. The ordinary view that he was a sensual pleasure- seeker and a callous tyrant does less than justice. All accounts agree that he was intelligent, shrewd, and capable of understanding the most complex problems of the state without any difficulty... There is much in his character that deserves to be condemned, but there is a great deal that entitles him to be placed among the most fascinating personalities of Indian history."

Jahangir's reign, on the whole, was fruitful of peace and prosperity to the empire. Under its auspices, industry and commerce progressed; architecture achieved notable triumphs; painting

reached its high water mark; literature flourished as it had never done before. A host of remarkable Persian and vernacular poets all over the country combined to make the period the Augustan age of medieval Indian literature. The political side of Jahangir's history is interesting enough but its virtue lies in cultural development."