

Early Life and Difficulties Faced by Humayun and Babur Legacy!

Humayun's early life:

As the story goes, Humayun fell ill and his father Babur prayed for his recovery and transfer his illness to him. His prayer was granted. Humayun recovered, Babur fell ill and died soon.

After the death of his father, Humayun ascended the throne of Delhi. Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad Humayun who is popularly known as Humayun was the eldest son of Babur. Kamran, Askari and Hindal were his step brothers. He learnt Turki, Arabic and Persian. He worked as governor of a province in Kabul.

He took part in the battles of Panipat and Khanwa. He looked after the administration of Hissar, Firoza and Sambhal. He was nominated by Babur as his successor. Humayun is probably the only king in the history of India whose rule included two spells, one from 1530-40 and the other in 1555-56 after his fifteen years' exile from India. Humayun, literally meaning 'fortunate' but through most part of his life, he remained 'unfortunate'. He is again the only king who on the advice of his father treated his half-brothers in real brotherly affection but without any reciprocal response from them rather betrayal from one.

Early difficulties faced by Humayun and Babur's Legacy:

The throne inherited by Humayun was full of thorns. He had to face several difficulties right from his accession. Among the major factors which contributed to his difficulties and problems were the legacy of Babur's will, the unfriendly treatment of his brothers and relatives and lastly, the hostile attitude of the Afghans and the Rajput's.

Babur had entered the country as a stranger and spoiler. He had defeated the armies and broken the power of the reigning dynasty i.e. the Lodis. The only hold which he and the Mughals had upon the people of India was military force. Babur had not created a strong administrative machinery to control such a vast empire.

1. Division of empire according to Babur's will:

Humayun very faithfully implemented the will of his father. He treated all his young step brothers very kindly. He made Kamran the ruler of Kabul and Kandhar, Askari, the ruler of Rohilkhand and Hindal, the ruler of Mewat (comprising the

modern territories of Alwar, Mathura and Gurgaon). Thus his sphere of influence and power was reduced. This division weakened the unity of the empire.

2. Ungratefulness and incompetency of Humayun's brothers:

Kamran, after taking Kabul and Kandhar, took Punjab forcibly. Hindal too declared himself emperor. Askari lost some part of the area allotted to him. All these actions had an adverse effect on Humayun.

3. Hostile attitude of Humayun's own relatives:

Mutual conspiracies and jealousies of Humayun's relatives created several problems for him. Muhammad Jama Mirza, a powerful noble and the husband of Humayun's sister, Muhammad Mehdi Khwaja, Babur's brother-in law, and Muhammad Sultan Mirza, Humayun's cousin were quite powerful and ambitious. They created several problems for him.

4. Lack of suitable administrative machinery:

Babur spent almost his time in wars and could not take suitable steps to organize the administration of the territories he conquered.

5. Want of a well-integrated and unified army:

The Mughal army was a heterogeneous body of several races—Chaghatais, Uzbeks, Mughals, Persian, Afghans and Hindustanis, etc. Such an army could be kept under control and disciplined only under the leadership of a capable, dashing and inspiring commander like Babur. Humayun was too weak for this purpose.

6. Babur's Distribution of Jagirs:

Babur's nobles and soldiers had rendered great assistance to him in his conquests. Therefore, in order to please them Babur gave them Jagirs liberally, In due course these nobles became very powerful and they posed a great threat to the stability of the Mughal empire.

7. Paucity of funds:

After getting enormous wealth from the royal treasuries of Delhi and Ajmer, Babur distributed it so lavishly among his soldiers and nobles that very little were left for Humayun to conduct the affairs of his administration.

8. Hostility of the Afghans:

The Afghans who were ruling Delhi a few years back still had ambition to capture power again. Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, was also an Afghan. He was also ambitious of the throne of Delhi. But the most important and powerful Afghan, who later drove away Humayun, was Sher Shah.

9. Belied Rajput's hopes:

Though the power of the Rajput's had been weakened by Babur, yet they cherished some hopes of recovering their lost power and territories.

Humayun's own responsibility for most of his Difficulties:

As a ruler he lacked foresight and was incapable of taking a long term view of political and military problems. He was not a good judge of men and circumstances. He lacked sustained effort and after a victory he would fritter away his energy in revelry.

No doubt, he inherited a rich-legacy of difficulties but he made it richer by his own blunders. His lethargy was chronic. Though beset with dangers and better enemies all around, he did not develop the 'Killer's instinct'. He was daring as a soldier but not cautious as a general. He failed to pounce upon opportunities as well as upon his enemies in time. In the words of Lane-poole, "Humayun's greatest enemy was he himself."

1. Weak personality:

Humayun lacked resolution and sustained energy, foresight and quick grasp of situation. "He revelled at the table when he ought to have been in the saddle". He was slow to understand men, slow to grasp golden opportunities, slow to decide, slow to win a battle. As observed by Lane-poole, "He lacked character and resolution. He was incapable of sustained efforts after a moment of triumph and would busy himself in his 'harem' and dream away the precious hour in the opium eaters' paradise while his enemies were thundering at his gate.

2. Underestimating Sher Shah's strength:

He failed to estimate the growing power of Sher Shah Suri. He should not have accepted the halfhearted submission of Sher Shah at chunar. In fact he should have nipped him in the bud.

3. Negative response to Rajput's' request:

He should have given a positive response to the request of the Rajput's and attacked Bahadur Shah of Gujarat at Chittor and should have completely crushed his power.

4. Lack of military strategies:

Humayun did not attack his strong opponents at the appropriate time. Instead of rushing to Chittor to attack Bahadur Shah, he wasted time in festivities at Mandu. Likewise, instead of punishing the rebels in Bihar, he spent several months on his way in besieging minor places. All this gave time to his adversaries to make adequate preparations and to consolidate their positions.

5. Defensive attitude:

After his defeat at Chausa, he always remained on the defensive. He did not attempt to recapture the territory.

6. Wrong choice of site:

In the battle of Kanauj, he made blunders in choosing a low land for encampment and for remaining inactive before the enemy for two months.

7. Leniency to his enemies:

He pardoned again and again those who revolted against him. This he did not only in the case of Kamran but also in the case of Mohammad Zaman Mirza.

8. Sher Shah – more capable:

It must be admitted that he was no match for Sher Khan who was in every respect superior to him in preparing and planning battles and in fighting the enemy. Sher Shah had more experience, more knowledge of strategies, more organizing capacity. He never missed an opportunity and could use wily tricks and crafty means to conquer the enemy while Humayun could not do anything, which did not belove a king as well as gentleman, and refined person.

Humayun in Exile (1540-1555 A.D.):

Humayun remained in exile for nearly fifteen years after his defeat at the battle of Kannauj. His efforts to go to Kashmir or Badakhshan were foiled by his brother Kamran. He then proceeded to Sindh and tried to capture it but failed. In 1541 A.D. he married Hamida Banu, the daughter of the spiritual preceptor of Hindal, Mir Ali Akbar Jani.

Hindal left for Kandhar at that time and another loyal officer of Humayun, Yadgar Mirza also left his company. Humayun, proceeded towards Marwar. Its ruler Maldeva had assured of his help to Humayun about a year back. But, Humayun realized that he was not in a mood to help him at that time and, probably, was won over by Sher Shah to his side.

He immediately withdrew himself because he feared that Maldeva would imprison him and hand him over to Sher Shah. While returning from there he was given shelter by Virasala, the Rajput ruler of Amarkot where Akbar was born in 1542 A.D. Shah Husain, the ruler of south Sindh agreed to give passage and needful help to Humayun to proceed to Kandhar at that time and Humayun left India.

Kamran tried to capture him on the way but Humayun could reach Persia safely after leaving his infant son Akbar. Akbar was taken under the care of Askari who was the governor of Kandhar at that time. Shah Tahmasp, the ruler of Persia, welcomed Humayun and agreed to help him with money and soldiers in 1544 A.D. on condition that he would accept the Shia faith, propagate it among his subjects and restore Kandhar to Persia after its conquest.

Humayun had to accept that humiliating treaty and then he proceeded to attack Kandhar with the help of the Persian forces. Humayun captured Kandhar and Kabul from Kamran in 1545 A.D. and retained Kandhar to himself after the death of the son of Shah Tahmasp. Here he was joined back by Hindal and Yadgar Mirza. But, Kamran and Askari troubled him.

They were, however, defeated several times, pardoned by Humayun every time but, ultimately, were captured and punished. Kamran was blinded and allowed to proceed to Mecca where he died in 1557 A.D. Askari was also allowed to go to Mecca from where he never returned and died in 1558 A.D.

Hindal also fell fighting against the Afghans during this period. Thus, ultimately, Humayun became free from the rivalry of his brothers and settled himself in Afghanistan from where he got an opportunity to come back to India and recover his lost empire.

Recovery of Indian Empire and Death of Humayun (1555-1556 A.D.):

Sher Shah who had turned out Humayun from India died in 1545 A.D. He was succeeded by Islam Shah. Humayun once attempted to attack India during his life-time but could not carry out his plan due to vigorous activity of Islam Shah. Islam Shah died in October 1553 A.D. That resulted in the division of the Afghan empire in India.

His twelve-year old son, Firoz Shah was murdered by his maternal uncle, Mubariz who captured the throne and assumed the title of Muhammad Adil Shah. Adil Shah was a pleasure-seeker and left the responsibility of administration in the hands of his Hindu minister, Hemu. The authority of Adil Shah was soon challenged by two members of the royal family, named Ibrahim Shah and Sikandar Shah and Bengal declared its independence under Muhammad Shah.

Adil Shah, Ibrahim Shah and Sikandar Shah hotly contested among themselves for the capture of the empire. Nobody succeeded in eliminating others which resulted in the division of the empire. Sikandar Shah established himself at Lahore and Ibrahim Shah at Bayana while Adil Shah retired to Chunargarh leaving Hemu to contest against his rivals.

Delhi was taken over first by Ibrahim Shah and then by Sikandar Shah. This was the state of affairs of the empire which was built up by Sher Shah when Humayun decided to recapture his lost empire. In November 1554 A.D., Humayun proceeded towards Peshawar and captured the territory up to Lahore by the beginning of 1555 A.D. Sikandar Shah sent an army under Tatar Khan and Haibat Khan to check the advance of Humayun.

The battle of Machhiwara took place on 15 May 1555 A.D. between the Afghans and the Mughuls. It was a complete victory for the Mughuls and entire Panjab was occupied by them. Sikandar Shah himself then marched forward to fight against the Mughuls and the battle of Sarhind was fought between the two on 22 June 1555 A.D.

Sikandar Shah was defeated and fled to the hills of north-west Punjab. Humayun, then occupied Delhi in July 1555 A.D. Afterwards, Agra, Sambhal and the nearby territory was also occupied by the Mughuls.

Humayun, however, could not live long after the capture of Delhi. One day when he was descending from the stairs of the library at Din Panah, he slipped and fractured his skull. Only two days after the accident, he died on 26 January 1556 A.D. He nominated his son Akbar as his successor to the throne before his death.