

Nur-ud-din Salim Jahangir (full title: Al-Sultan al-'Azam wal Khaqan al-Mukarram, Khushru-i-Giti Panah, Abu'l-Fath Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir Padshah Ghazi [Jannat-Makaani] (September 20, 1569-November 8, 1627) (OS August 31, 1569 – NS November 8, 1627) was the ruler of the Mughal Empire from 1605 until his death. The name Jahangir is from Persian name Arabic an is Din-al Nur or din-ud-Nur ."World the of Conqueror" meaning ,دین ال نور which means " Light of the Faith."

Born as Prince Muhammad Salim, he was the third and eldest surviving son of Mughal Emperor Akbar. Akbar's twin sons, Hasan and Hussain, died in infancy. His mother was the Rajput Princess of Amber, Jodhabai (born Rajkumari Hira Kunwari, eldest daughter of Raja Bihar Mal or Bharmal, Raja of Amber, India).

Jahangir was a child of many prayers.[2] It is said to be by the blessing of Shaikh Salim Chishti (one of the revered sages of his times) that Akbar's first surviving child, the future Jahangir, was born. He was born at the dargah of the Shaikh Salim Chishti, within the fortress at Fatehpur Sikri near Agra. The child was named Salim after the darvesh and was affectionately addressed by Akbar as Sheikhu Baba.

Akbar developed an emotional attachment with the village Sikri (abode of Chishti). Therefore, he developed the town of Sikri and shifted his imperial court and residence from Agra to Sikri, later renamed as Fatehpur Sikri.

Education

Akbar ensured that his son received the best education possible. Salim started his studies at the age of four and was taught Fārsi, Turkish, Arabic, Urdū, history, arithmetic, geography and other sciences by important tutors like Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, a renowned soldier and scholar.

Revolt

In 1600, when Akbar was away from the capital on an expedition, Salim broke into an open rebellion, and declared himself Emperor.[3] Akbar had to hastily return to Agra and restore order. There was a time when Akbar thought of putting Khusraw on the throne instead of Salim.[4] Prince Salim forcefully succeeded to the throne on November 3, 1605, eight days after his father's death. Salim ascended to the throne with the title of Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir Padshah Ghazi, and thus began his 22-year reign at the age of 36. Jahangir soon after had to fend off his son, Prince Khusraw, when he attempted to claim the throne based on Akbar's will to become his next heir. Khusraw was defeated in 1606 and confined in the fort of Agra. As punishment Khusraw was blinded, and the Sikh Guru Arjun (the religious spiritual head of the sect at the time) was put to death, for giving the then fugitive Khusraw money when he visited Guru Arjun. Jahangir's rule was characterized by the same religious tolerance as his father Akbar, with the exception of his hostility with the Sikhs, which was forged so early on in his rule.[5]

In 1622, Khurram (Shah Jahan), younger brother of Khusraw, had Khusraw murdered in a conspiracy to eliminate all possible contenders to the throne. Taking advantage of this internal

conflict, the Persians seized the city of Qandahar and as a result of this loss, the Mughals lost control over the trade routes to Afghanistan, Persian and Central Asia and also exposed India to invasions from the north-west.[6]

Reign

Jahangir in Darbar, from the Jahangir-nama, c.1620. Gouache on paper.

Emperor Jahangir, Triumphant Over Poverty, ca 1620-1625.

Gold Mohur of Jahangir, commemorating the sixth year of his reign 1611.

An aesthete [7], Jahangir decided to start his reign with a grand display of "Justice", as he saw it. To this end, he enacted Twelve Decrees[8] that are remarkable for their liberalism and foresight. During his reign, there was a significant increase in the size of the Mughal Empire, half a dozen rebellions were crushed, prisoners of war were released, and the work of his father, Akbar, continued to flourish. Much like his father, Jahangir was dedicated to the expansion of Mughal held territory through conquest. During this regime he would target the peoples of Assam near the eastern frontier and bring a series of territories controlled by independent rajas in the Himalayan foothills from Kashmir to Bengal. Jahangir would challenge the hegemonic claim over Persia by the Safavid rulers with an eye on Kabul, Peshawar and Qandahar which were important centers of the central Asian trade system that northern India operated within.[9] In 1622 Jahangir would send his son Prince Khurram against the combined forces of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda. After his victory Khurram would turn against his father and make a bid for power. As with the insurrection of his eldest son Khusraw, Jahangir was able to defeat the challenge from within his family and retain power.[10]

Jahangir promised to protect Islam and granted general amnesty to his opponents. He was also notable for his patronage of the arts, especially of painting. During his reign the distinctive style of Mughal painting expanded and blossomed. Jahangir supported a flourishing culture of court painters.

Jahangir is most famous for his golden “chain of justice.” The chain was setup as a link between his people and Jahangir himself. Standing outside the castle of Agra with sixty bells, anyone was capable of pulling the chain and having a personal hearing from Jahangir himself.

Furthermore, Jahangir preserved the Mughal tradition of having a highly centralized form of government. The son of a Hindu Rajput mother who converted to Islam, Jahangir made the precepts of Sunni Islam the cornerstone of his state policies. A faithful Muslim, as evidenced by his memoirs, he expressed his gratitude to Allah for his many victories. Jahangir, as a devout muslim, did not let his personal beliefs dictate his state policies[citation needed]. Sovereignty, according to Jahangir, was a “gift of God” not necessarily given to enforce God’s law but rather to “ensure the contentment of the world.” In civil cases, Islamic law applied to Muslims, Hindu law applied to Hindus, while criminal law was the same for both Muslims and Hindus[citation needed]. In matters like marriage and inheritance, both communities had their own laws that Jahangir respected. Thus Jahangir was able to deliver justice to people in accordance of their beliefs, and also keep his hold on empire by unified criminal law. In the Mughal state, therefore, defiance of imperial authority, whether coming from a prince or anyone else aspiring to political power, or a Muslim or a Hindu, was crushed in the name of law and order.

Jahangir's relationship with other rulers of the time is one that was well documented by Sir Thomas Roe, especially his relationship with the Persian King, Shah Abbas. Though conquest was one of Jahangir’s many goals, he was a naturalist and lover of the arts and did not have

quite the same warrior ambition of the Persian king. This led to a mutual enmity that, while diplomatically hidden, was very clear to observers within Jahangir's court. Furthermore, Abbas had, for many years, been trying to recover the city of Kandahar, which Jahangir was not keen to part with, especially to this king whom he did not particularly care for, despite seeing him as an equal.[11]

In this state, Jahangir was also open to the influence of his wives, a weakness exploited by many. Because of this constant inebriated state, Nur Jahan, the favourite wife of Jahangir, became the actual power behind the throne[citation needed].

Marriage

Salim was made a Mansabdar of ten thousand (Das-Hazari), the highest military rank of the empire, after the emperor. He independently commanded a regiment in the Kabul campaign of 1581, when he was barely twelve. His Mansab was raised to Twelve Thousand, in 1585, at the time of his betrothal to his cousin Manbhawati Bai, daughter of Bhagwan Das of Amber. Raja Bhagwant Das, was the son of Raja Bharmal and the brother of Akbar's wife Rajkumari Hira Kunwari, also known as Mariam Zamani.

The marriage with Manbhawati Bai took place on February 13, 1585. Manbhawati gave birth to Khusrau Mirza. Thereafter, Salim was allowed to marry, in quick succession, a number of accomplished girls from the aristocratic Mughal and Rajput families. One of his favourite wives was a Rajput Princess, known as Jagat Gosain and Princess Manmati, who gave birth to Prince Khurram, the future Shah Jahan, Jahangir's successor to the throne. The total number

of wives in his harem was more than eight hundred.[3]

Jahangir married the extremely beautiful and intelligent Mehr-ul-Nisa (better known by her subsequent title of Nur Jahan), in May 1611. She was the widow of Sher Afghan. She was witty, intelligent and beautiful, which was what attracted Jahangir to her. Before being awarded the title of Nur Jahan ('Light of the World'), she was called Nur Mahal ('Light of the Palace'). Her abilities are said to range from fashion designing to hunting. There is also a myth that she had once killed four tigers with six bullets.

Nur Jahan

Main article: Nur Jahan

Nur Jahan

The story of Nur Jahan occupies an important place in the history of Jahangir. She was the widow of a rebel officer, Sher Afghan, of Mughals. The governor of Bengal was killed by him and consequently he suffered the same fate at the hands of the guards of the Governor. His widow, Mehr-un-Nisaa, was brought to Agra and placed in the Royal harem in 1607. Jahangir married her in 1611 and gave her the title of Nur Jahan or "Light of the World". Jahangir is thought to have had a hand in the death of her husband. But there is no conclusive evidence to prove that he was guilty of that crime.

According to poet and author Vidya Dhar Mahajan, Nur Jahan had a piercing intelligence, a versatile temper and sound common sense.[12] She possessed great physical strength and courage. She went on hunting tours with her husband, and on more than one occasion shot and killed ferocious tigers.[13] She was devoted to Jahangir and he forgot all about the world and entrusted all the work of the government to her.[14]

The loss of Kandahar was due to Nur Jahan.[15] When the Persians besieged Kandahar, Nur Jahan was at the helm of affairs. She ordered Prince Khurram to march for Kandahar, but the latter refused to do so. There is no doubt that the refusal of the prince was due to her behaviour towards him.[15] She was favouring her son-in-law, Shahryar, at the expense of Khurram. Khurram suspected that in his absence, Shahryar might be given promotion and he might die on the battlefield. It was this fear which forced Khurram to rebel against his father rather than fight against the Persians[15] and thereby Kandahar was lost to the Persians.

Conquests

Jahangir (l) and Akbar (r).

Jahangir was responsible for ending a century long struggle with the state of Mewar. The campaign against the Rajputs was pushed so extensively that the latter were made to submit and that too with a great loss of life and property.

Jahangir also thought of capturing the fort of Kangra, which Akbar had failed to do. Consequently a siege was laid, which lasted for fourteen months, and the fort was taken in 1620.

The district of Kistwar, in the state of Kashmir, was also conquered.

Death

Jahangir's Mausoleum in Shahdara, Lahore

The health of Jahangir was completely shattered by too much drinking of alcohol.[16] He was trying to restore it by visiting Kashmir and Kabul. He went from Kabul to Kashmir but returned to Lahore on account of a severe cold.

Jahangir died on the way from Kashmir in 1627 and was buried in Shahdara Bagh, a suburb of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. He was succeeded by his third son, Prince Khurram who took the title of Shah Jahan. Jahangir's elegant mausoleum is located in the Shahdara locale of Lahore and is a popular tourist attraction in Lahore. On his death in 1627 he uttered 'Kashmir only Kashmir'.

Autobiography

Main article: Tuzk-e-Jahangiri

Jahangir was an excellent writer and loved nature. He recorded various details of flora and fauna from all over India. He was not only curious, but a scientific observer of minute details of species, a number of his observations are detailed in Tuzk-e-Jahangiri, also referred to as Jahangirnama [17]. He liked paintings and collected many of them in his palace. Some of them are still found in museums. There is hardly any contemporary anywhere in the world who matched his curiosity, style and diction.

Jahangir and Religion

While Sunni Islam was the state religion, there was no widespread pressure to convert; indeed, Jahangir specifically warned his nobles that they "should not force Islam on anyone." In the first century of Islamic expansion this attitude was taken partially because of concerns that an absence of non-Muslims would deprive the state of a valuable source of revenue. However, as the jizya was not imposed by Jahangir, there might have been more behind this policy of toleration than mere economic reasoning. Jahangir was certainly willing to engage with other religions, and Edward Terry, an English chaplain in India at the time, saw a ruler under which "all Religions are tolerated and their Priests [held] in good esteeme." Brahmins on the banks of the Ganges received gifts from the emperor, while following a meeting with Jadrup, a Hindu ascetic, Jahangir felt compelled to comment that "association with him is a great privilege." He enjoyed debating theological subtleties with Brahmins, especially about the possible existence of avatars. Both Sunnis and Shias were welcome at court, and members of both sects gained

high office. When drunk, Jahangir swore to Sir Thomas Roe, England's first ambassador to the Mughal court, that he would protect all the peoples of the book. Many contemporary chroniclers were not even sure quite how to describe his personal belief structure.

Roe labelled him an atheist, and although most others shied away from that term, they did not feel as though they could call him an orthodox Sunni. He relied greatly on astrologers, though that was not seen as unusual for a ruler at the time, even to the extent that he required that they work out the most auspicious time for the imperial camp to enter a city. Roe believed Jahangir's religion to be of his own making, "for hee envyes Mahomett, and wisely sees noe reason why he should not bee as great a prophet as hee, and therefore proffeseth him selfe soe ... he hath found many disciples that flatter or follow him." At this time, one of those disciples happened to be the current English ambassador, though his initiation into Jahangir's inner circle of disciples was devoid of religious significance for Roe, as he did not understand the full extent of what he was doing: Jahangir hung "a picture of him selfe sett in gould hanging at a wire gould chaine, with one pendent foule pearle" round Roe's neck. Roe thought it "an especiall favour, for that all the great men that weare the Kings image (which none may doe but to whom it is given) receive no other then a meddall of gould as bigg as six pence."

Had Roe intentionally converted, it would have caused quite a scandal in London. But since there was no intent, there was no resultant problem. Such disciples were an elite group of imperial servants, with one of them being promoted to Chief Justice. However, it is not clear that any of those who became disciples renounced their previous religion, so it is probable to see this as a way in which the emperor strengthened the bond between himself and his nobles. Despite Roe's somewhat casual use of the term 'atheist', he could not quite put his finger on Jahangir's real beliefs. Roe lamented that the emperor was either "the most impossible man in the world to be converted, or the most easy; for he loves to heare, and hath so little religion yet, that hee can well abyde to have any derided." Broad toleration for other religions made little sense to Europeans forged in the heat of religious conflict, while the lifestyle and pretensions Jahangir afforded himself meant that it was difficult to see him as a devout Muslim. Sri Ram Sharma argues though that contemporaries and some historians have been too disparaging about Jahangir's beliefs, simply because he did not persecute non-believers and enforce his views on others.

This should not imply that the multi-confessional state appealed to all, or that all Muslims were happy with the situation in India. In a book written on statecraft for Jahangir, the author advised him to direct "all his energies to understanding the counsel of the sages and to comprehending the intimations of the 'ulama." At the start of his regime many staunch Sunnis were hopeful, because he seemed less tolerant to other faiths than his father had been. At the time of his accession and the elimination of Abu'l Fazl, his father's chief minister and architect of his eclectic religious stance, a strong orthodox nucleus of noblemen had gained power in administration." Jahangir did not always benevolently regard some Hindu customs and rituals. On visiting a Hindu temple, he found a statue of a man with a pig's head, which was supposed to represent God, so he "ordered them to break that hideous form and throw it in the tank." If the Tuzuk is reliable on this subject (and there is no reason to suspect that it is not), then this was an isolated case.

J. F. Richards argues that "Jahangir seems to have been persistently hostile to popularly venerated religious figures." This is perhaps misleading. Hindu ascetics like Jadrup were treated with respect, and it was only those who upset the order of the state that were seen as a threat to the state, with their popularity making them even more dangerous. A Muslim, who had gained some followers by claiming that he had surpassed the understanding of the companions of Muhammad, was imprisoned in Gwalior Fort. If he had been allowed to spread his message there was potential for serious disturbance, so he had to be stopped.

Most notorious was the execution of the Sikh Guru Arjun. It is unclear that Jahangir even understood what a Sikh was, referring to Guru Arjun as a Hindu, who had "captured many of the simple-hearted of the Hindus, and even of the ignorant and foolish followers of Islam, by his ways and manners ... for three or four generations (of spiritual successors) they had kept this shop warm." The trigger for Guru Arjun's execution was his support for Jahangir's rebel son Khusrau, yet it is clear from Jahangir's own memoirs that he disliked Guru Arjun before then: "many times it occurred to me to put a stop to this vain affair or bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam."

Guru Arjun was handed over to the Mughal governor of Lahore, and was tortured to death for refusing to convert to Islam. Jahangir ordered his execution, but it is unlikely that he also ordered Guru Arjun to be tortured and converted, for two reasons; one, because we have no other examples from Jahangir's generally tolerant reign to support the idea that he forced people to convert to Islam, and two, because Jahangir makes no note of Guru Arjun's torture, yet cheerfully describes the torture of two other rebels, as well as Guru Arjun's execution. Jahangir maintained his hostility towards the Sikhs, imprisoning Guru Hargobind, the successor of Guru Arjun, for several years.

A rana was described as an infidel, but only because he was fighting against the Mughals, and infidel was used as an everyday phrase to describe all non-Muslims anyway. Admittedly Muslims were discouraged from performing most Hindu rites, with Jahangir lamenting that many Muslims prayed at a temple dedicated to Durga, and worshipped at a black stone. With Jahangir himself occasionally taking part in Hindu ceremonies, the aforementioned example was probably one way of showing support for the idea that Muslim and Hindus should not mix their rituals. His attitude to religion in his domain was relaxed yet diligent. He saw himself as doing Allah's bidding, yet he was inquisitive enough to explore new ideas about religion, intelligent enough to understand that Hindus were in the majority and grand enough in his pretensions not to need to obey every line of the Qur'an.

Such a religious situation allowed the more recently arrived form of Christianity to have opportunity to grow. Jahangir did not seem to have anything against Christianity. He wrote fondly of Akbar's reign, when "Sunnis and Shias met in one mosque, and Franks and Jews in one church, and observed their own forms of worship." Roe noted that "of Christ he never utters any word unreverently." His prayer room in Agra contained pictures of "our Lady and Chrif." In the imperial palace in Lahore, over one of the doors, according to William Finch, a merchant, was "the Picture of our Saujour," with an image of the Virgin Mary facing it. Elsewhere, the emperor had pictures of angels and demons, with the demons having a "moft vgly fhape, with long hornes, ftaring eyes ... with fuch horrible difformity and deformity, that I wonder the poore women are not frightened therewith."

It is possible that Jahangir might have seen these images in their Islamic persona, as the Qur'an features such creatures, yet depiction of living things was haram (forbidden), so the images could well have been created by a Christian artist. However, as Mughal art was still heavily Persian-influenced, images of living beings were allowed, and widespread, so perhaps the otherworldly images had nothing to do with Christianity at all; they nonetheless caught Finch's eye. Muqarrab Khan sent to Jahangir "a European curtain (tapestry) the like of which in beauty no other work of the Frank painters has ever been seen." One of his audience halls was "adorned with European screens." Christian themes attracted Jahangir, and even merited a mention in the Tuzuk. One of his slaves gave him a piece of ivory into which had been carved four scenes. In the last scene "there is a tree, below which the figure of the revered (hazrat) Jesus is shown. One person has placed his head at Jesus' feet, and an old man is conversing with Jesus and four others are standing by." Though Jahangir believed it to be the work of the slave who presented it to him, Sayyid Ahmad and Henry Beveridge suggest that it was of European origin, and possibly showed the Transfiguration. Wherever it came from, and whatever it represented, it was clear that a European style had come to influence Mughal art, otherwise the slave would not have claimed it as his own design, nor would he have been believed by Jahangir.

There was even some baseless suggestion that Jahangir had converted to Christianity. Thrown by the religious tolerance of Akbar and Jahangir's rule, the Jesuits had long thought that they were always on the verge of conversion. Finch recounted how there "was much flattery with the King about Christianity, he affirming before his Nobles, that it was the fount of faith, and that of Mahomet lies and fables." This is an extremely implausible story, yet the fact that Finch told it at all shows the extent to which Christianity was evident in the Mughal court. Jahangir apparently allowed a Jesuit to teach some Indian boys Portuguese and elements of Christian doctrine, and the Jesuits were also allowed to open churches in Ahmadabad and Hooghly. Christians were allowed to openly celebrate Christmas, Easter and other such festivals, and the Jesuits were even given an allowance and gifts in order to carry on with their work, with a few Indians converting to Christianity. Given the toleration of Hinduism, such imperial leeway was not shocking. Christianity occupied a special place in Islamic canon, as did Isa (Jesus), who was considered to be amongst the greatest prophets.

What did surprise some observers was the forcible conversion of three sons of Jahangir's brother, Prince Daniyal, to Christianity, followed by a parade to celebrate their conversions. This was seen by the Jesuits as a gigantic step forward, but the English and the locals knew better. Hawkins dryly commented that Jahangir made his nephews Christian "not for any zeale he had to Chrifianitie, as the [Jesuit] Fathers, and all Chriftians thought; but vpon the prophecie of certain learned Gentiles [Hindus], who told him that the fonnes of his fould [will] be difinherited, and the children of his brother fould raigne. And therefore he did it, to make thefe children hatefull to all Moores." This highlighted the likely limits of Christianity in India. Its inhabitants already had mono- and poly-theistic religions from which to choose, and the European Christians had done little to demonstrate the attractiveness of conversion. A few did convert, though Terry believed that this was only for Jesuit money, as they did not appear to know anything about their new religion, and Roe agreed on this matter. Even Jahangir's nephews were allowed to return to the Islamic fold, because "the King of Portugall sent them no presents nor wives." Christianity was tolerated because it posed no real threat. It certainly had an effect on the arts, but it is difficult to discern any other lasting impact on Mughal India.

Jahangir and Art

Jahangir was fascinated with art and architecture. Jahangir himself is far from modest in his autobiography when he states his prowess at being able to determine the artist of any portrait by simply looking at a painting. As he said:

"...my liking for painting and my practice in judging it have arrived at such point when any work is brought before me, either of deceased artists or of those of the present day, without the names being told me, I say on the spur of the moment that is the work of such and such a man. And if there be a picture containing many portraits, and each face is 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 perceive whose work the original face is, and who has painted the eye and eyebrow."

Jahangir took his connoisseurship of art very seriously. Paintings created under his reign were closely catalogued, dated and even signed, providing scholars with fairly accurate ideas as to when and in what context many of the pieces were created, in addition to their aesthetic qualities.

He was not only an admirer of Christian artwork but also a purveyor of it. This was largely due to earlier Jesuit missions during his father's reign. Jesuits had brought with them various books, engravings, and paintings and, when they saw the delight Akbar held for them, sent for more and more of the same to be given to the Mughals, as they felt they were on the "verge of conversion," a notion which proved to be very false. Instead, both Akbar and Jahangir studied this artwork very closely and replicated and adapted it, adopting much of the early iconographic features and later the pictorial realism for which Renaissance art was known for. Jahangir was notable for his pride in the ability of his court painters. A classic example of this is described in Sir Thomas Roe's diaries, in which the Emperor had his painters copy a European miniature several times creating a total of five miniatures. Jahangir then challenged Roe to pick out the original from the copies, a feat Sir Thomas Roe could not do, to the delight of Jahangir.

Jahangir was also revolutionary in his adaptation of European styles. A collection at the British Museum in London contains seventy-four drawings of Indian portraits dating from the time of Jahangir, including a portrait of the emperor himself. These portraits are a unique example of art during Jahangir's reign because before, and for sometime after, faces were not drawn full, head-on and including the shoulders as well as the head as these drawings are.[18]

During his time, Jahangir also pioneered several ornate genealogies illustrated with portraits of each family member in the style of Italian Renaissance painters[19]. Jahangir's love for hunting met his love for art as he commissioned artists on multiple occasions to paint him while hunting and would even paint scenes himself, from time to time[20]. Jahangir was also known for his vast collection of illuminated Persian albums that contained writings as well as paintings[21].

In media

Nur-ud-din Salim Jahangir, his father Akbar the Great and Anarkali, were portrayed in the Hindi film Mughal-e-Azam, in which Jahangir was played by Dilip Kumar. Jalal Agha also played the younger Jahangir at the start of the film.