**The Mughal Period in India: Mughal Sources and Advent of Mughals**

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Nearly 450 years (AD 1526 to 1964) of this period make a period of transition which transformed the Indian society and culture from that of traditional, supersti­tion-ridden and inward-looking society to the brave new world of democratic values based on equity and social justice and looking forward with hope and determination to usher in a new economic and social order.

One notices in this period of study the theme of continuity and change as is seen in the earlier period of pre-colonial society and culture.

In spite of the imposition of colonial and imperialistic hegemony and efforts to make us ‘mimics’ of western cultural tradi­tions and scientific and technological innovations, the Indians retained their individuality in protecting their basic nature. We can notice this in our endeavour to ‘become a nation’ for more than a century.

In this period only the new concepts of globalization, transnationalism and international capitalism took deep roots and strengthened to pose a threat to the survival of the nations as independent sovereign democracies. In order to understand and appreciate the historical change that took place in India, we have abundant source material.

Broadly, this phase of450 years can be divided as the period or the Mughals and their successor states up to 1757, the colonial and imperialist regime up to 1947 and post-independent India up to 1964. First, let us take up the source material pertaining to the Mughals and successor states up to 1757. During this period, even before the Mughals landed in India as conquerors, the first European nation – the Portuguese entered India as traders and during the Mughal rule, the other Europeans: the Dutch, the British and the French entered India as traders by obtaining the permission of the sovereign powers.

#### The Mughal Sources:

Tuzuk-i-Babur or Babarnama written by Babur, the founder of the Mughal power as autobiography in his mother tongue, Chagtai Turki occupies the first place. It is a true reflection of his account of India and it gives information from Babur’s birth to AD 1529. Humayun Nama written by Gulbadan Begum, the daughter of Babur and sister of Humayan records a brief account of Babur and a detailed account of Humayan. This was written at the instance of Akbar.:

The Tuhfa-i-Akbari Shahi (Tarikh-i-Shershahi) of Abbas Khan Sarwani provides details of the life and works of Shershah. Abdul Qadir Badauni’s Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh is not dedicated to Akbar as Badauni was very critical of the ‘innovations’ of Akbar.

It is written in three volumes. It deals in detail with various important matters mentioned in Akbar Nama of Abul Fazl. Abul Fazl’s Akbar Nama consists of three volumes; the third volume is the Aini Akbari. While the first two volumes cover the period of Akbar up to the close of his 46th year, the third volume ‘Ain-i Akbar’ gives an account of the various imperial departments and also of the revenue and administrative officials, revenue rates of measured land and revenue statistics of Subhas, Sarkars and Paraganas. Khwaja Nizamuddin Ahmad Harawi’s Tabaquat-i-Akbari was completed in the year 1593-94 and it was composed in nine parts from the advent of Islam up to AD 1593-94.

Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri was the autobiography of Jahangir. It is also called Tarikh-i-Salim Shahi and Jahangirinama. Muhammad Qasim Uindu Shah Astrabadi’s Tarikh-i-Firishtah, deals with the history of the Sultans of the Deccan. Padshanama of Abdul Hamid Lahori is a biographical account of Shahjahan from his childhood to 1649. It is rated as the first-rate authority on the reign of Shahjahan. Besides this biography, Muhammad Amir Khan Qazyni and Muhammad Waris, a pupil of Lahori also wrote two biographies with the name Padshahnama. Of these two, the first one gives an account of the first 10 years and the other the last ten years’ rule of Shahjahan.

Inayat Khan, a high official of Shahjahan also wrote Shajahannama and another Shahjahannama was written by Muhamad Sadiq Khan. This covers the historical events from the death of Jahangir to the accession of Aurangzeb. Muhammad Saki Mustaid Khan was the author of Maasir-e-Alamgiri. This was written after the death of Aurangzeb with the help of state records. Mirza Muhammad Qazim was the author of Alamgimama. This is a good detailed history of the first ten years of Aurangzeb’s reign.

Muhammad Hashim Khafi Khan’s Muntakhab-ul-Lubab Muhammad Shahi is a voluminous history from the Muslim conquest of India up to the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. Besides these histories written in Persian, adminis­trative and accountancy manuals, statistical tables, Firmanas, Mishans or Parwanas, letters and dictionaries also serve useful purpose as primary source material. A number of books based on primary sources written in the last seventy-five years provide useful insights into the different reigns of the Mughal rulers. Further, the contemporaneous Portuguese, Dutch, English and French records and accounts provide useful information of the various aspects of Indian life.

Memoirs, travelogues, letters of the Jesuit fathers, and factory records come under the above category. Antorio Monserette, a Jesuit in his commentary published in 1597 written in Portuguese, provides a graphic account of the court of Akbar. William Hawkins’ work graphically describes Jahangir’s court. Sir Thomas Roe’s embassy (1615-1619) of Jahangir’s time offers political and economic information. Similarly, the Dutch factor, Pelsaert’s account, the travels of Peter Mundy, and Fray Sebastian Manrique, the travels of Francois Bernier and Storia do Mogor of Niccolo Manucci also throw very useful light on the contemporary Indian society.

Regarding the company rule and its impact, the primary sources are factory records, despatches from Fort St. George, Fort William and transaction between different Presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Bengal, despatches between Indian presidencies and East India Company officials, etc. Newspapers, journals and memoirs of the British officials also are very useful. There is abundant source material to understand the response of the Indians towards the British policies in the shape of petitions submitted by the Indians.

About the freedom movement in India too we have abundant source material in the state archives of all states and also books written by freedom fighters. Oral tradition is employed to elicit information from the participants in the freedom struggle from Quit India movement onwards.

There is also abundant source material of secondary nature to understand the nature and course of the National movement. Speeches, government records, parliamentary debates, newspaper editorials and reports throw a flood of light on the events of the contemporary period till 1964.

A historian, by using the source material judiciously and by analysing the authen­ticity of different sources, can arrive at proper understanding of the historical process without being subjective in choosing a fact. The objective of the historian or the history text book writer is not to sit on judgment of the past but to under­stand the process and relate it to the present and future.

#### Advent of Mughals:

The advent of the Mughals or the Timurids in India in the early decades of the sixteenth century is a significant landmark in the evolution of Indian nation and its culture. In the initial years, the Mughals had to face stiff opposition from the Afghans, who were replaced by the Mughals, and the Rajputs. Shershah Suri, the founder of the Second Afghan Empire by his prowess as a general and by his administrative genius laid the future foundations for the edifice of the Mughal polity.

A brilliant chapter began in the history of the Mughal rule from the middle of the sixteenth century with the accession of Akbar. By the first decade of the seventeenth century, the Mughals consolidated and expanded their sway over the whole of India and worked in the direction of establishing law and order along with the promotion of arts and letters.

The sunset of the Mughal polity was completed by the sixth decade of the 18th century and the power lingered on nominally till the end of the first war of Indian independence in 1857, when the last of the Mughal lineage Bahadur Shah was hanged by the British, who became the sovereign power in India from that event of historical significance. By the time Babur, the petty chieftain of Ferghana, lost his power and his strong desire to be the ruler of Samarqand became utterly futile and he started looking towards India as his new destination, as the power and prestige of the Lodis, the last of the dynasties of Delhi Sultanate was at its lowest ebb.

Political disunity was the order of the day and there arose innumerable centres of political authority, quarrelling mutually among themselves to acquire legit­imacy as sovereigns over a vast area. Iswari Prasad, aptly remarks that India was “a congeries of states at the opening of the 16th century and likely to be easy prey of an invader who had the strength and will to attempt her conquest”. Percival Spear also remarks that by the time of Babur’s invasion “Hindusthan was ruled by Afghan chiefs whose kingdoms were tumultuous confederacies of nobles rather than well organized states”. Babur in his memoirs also refers to “five Musalman rulers and two Pagans”.

The five Muslim rulers were the Lodies, and the rulers of Gujarat, Malwa, Bahamani and Bengal and the two pagans were Rana Sanga of Mewar and the king of Vijayanagar. Besides these major powers, there existed innumerable Afghan chieftains around Agra. While the above was the political situation in India, in central Asia the power of the Timurids was on decline, the Uzbeks captured firm foothold in Transoxonia and the Safavis captured Iran.

As a consequence, Babur the ruler of the small principality of Ferghana had to give up his long cherished desire of ruling over Samarqand by 1512 and turn his attention towards opening of gates of India by successive invasions from 1519 to 1526. Abul Fazl, the historian of the time of Akbar the grandson of Babur, pertinently notes that the meagre resources of Kabul and rich resources of India might have attracted Babur towards India.

In 1526 Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi in the battle of Panipat and founded the Mughal power in India. Iswari Prasad rightly observes, “The battle of Panipat placed the empire of Delhi in Babur’s hands. The power of the Lodi dynasty was shattered to pieces and the sovereignty of Hindusthan passed to the Chagatai Turks”. R.P. Tripathi also observes “the victory of Panipat laid the foundation of the great Mughal Empire which in grandeur and power and culture was the greatest in the Muslim world”.

By this victory, Babur had not become secure, and he had to face the threat of the Rajputs, who were deter­mined to restore their lost power. Babur fought against the Rajputs led by Rana Sanga at Kanwah in 1527 and succeeded in defeating them. R.P. Tripathi observes, “The consequences of this battle were indeed far reaching”. After this victory, Babur defeated the Rajputs in the battle of Chanderi in 1528 and defeated the Afghans in the battle of Ghogra in 1529.

In a series of three successive battles, Babur successfully achieved his objective of starting his reign in India; Babur lived for only a short time and breathed his last in 1530, leaving behind an unstable and insecure power structure as the Afghans and the Rajputs were still waiting for an opportunity to snatch the newly established power of the Mughals.

Babur, the link between central Asia and India, between predatory hordes and imperial government of Asia, a fearless warrior and an able general, scholar and poet, occupies a unique place among the medieval rulers of India. We can conclude with the statements of V.A. Smith “Babur was a most brilliant Asiatic prince of his age and worthy of a high place among the sovereigns of India”.

Babur had four sons, Humayun, Kamran, Askari and, Hindal and in 1530, his son Humayun, ‘the fortunate’ ascended the throne. Humayun failed to prove himself a worthy son to a determined conqueror like Babur and his life and reign was one of wasted chances in teaching a strong lesson to his opponents, the Afghan and the Rajputs. Humayun was replaced by Shershah Suri, who ruled for only a period of five years from AD 1540-45 but earned an eternal place in the galaxy of able rulers by his administrative genius. Humayun’s efforts to regain his lost power ended in dismal failure.



