**JAHANGIR**

**Jahangir (1605-27) and Main Events of His Reign**

**1. Early Career and Accession of Jahangir** - On 17th Oct., 1605 A.D. Akbar died and was succeeded by his son Salim who ascended the throne with the title of Nur-ud-Din- Jahangir. Akbar had two other sons (Murad and Daniyal) also but both of them had died during the life-time of their father. Jahangir was born in 1569 A.D. from Akbar's Rajput wife Mariyam-uz-Zaman. As this prince was born with the blessings of Sheikh Salim Chisti, so Akbar named him after the name of that saint. Akbar did all to provide his son the best possible education. Side by side with the literary education the military education was also imparted with great care. He was hardly 12 years of age when he was sent with the great military commanders on various military campaigns. To strengthen his son's position Akbar married him with the Rajput princesses. In 1585 A.D. Salim was married to Man Bai, daughter of Raja Bhagwan Das of Ambar and later on he was married to another Rajput princess Jodha Bai, daughter of Raja Udai Singh of Jodhpur.

But towards the end of Akbar's reign differences arose between the father and the son due to various causes. When Akbar tried to check Salim's addiction to wine and other low pleasures, the latter took it very ill. Consequently, when in 1599 A.D. Akbar directed his son to proceed against Mewar, he did not obey and instead took up arms against his father. To injure the feelings of his father Salim got his (Akbar's) beloved friend Abul Fazal killed in 1602 A.D. Taking the best advantage of the estrangement between the father and the son, Raja Man Singh and Mirza Koka tried to supersede Salim by his eldest son Prince Khusrau. Prince Khusrau was the son of Man Singh's sister (Rani Man Bai) and son-in-law of Mirza Aziz Koka and that is why they were interested in him. But later on understanding, however, developed between the father and the son and the father had his imperial turbar placed on the head of Salim before his death on 17th October, 1605. Thus Salim ascended the throne in 1605 (at the age of 36) with the imperial title of Nur-ud-din Jahangir.

**2. Main Events of Jahangir's Reign-** Jahangir ruled for about 22 years from 1605 to 1627 A.D. The main events of his reign were the following:

(1) *Early Reforms of Jahangir*. Soon after his accession to the throne Jahangir introduced many useful reforms: (i) He got a golden chain with 60 bells hung in his palace so that the common people could pull it and draw his attention towards their sufferings. (ii) For the welfare of his subjects various Sarais were built and wells were dug. (iii) Various severe punishments like the cutting of nose and ears were abolished. (iv) The manufacture and sale of wine and other intoxicating drugs was prohibited. (v) The levy of many unfair taxes was discontinued. (vi) Government hospitals were established in big cities and towns for the treatment of the poor. (vii) The slaughter of animals on certain days was prohibited. (viii) The revenue collectors were asked not to inter-marry with the people of their area (Pargana) without the royal permission.

(2) *Rebellion of Prince Khusrau, April-May, 1606.* Within five months of Jahangir's accession to the throne his eldest son, Khusrau (from his Rajput wife Man Bai of Ambar) raised a standard of revolt against his father and made a bid for the throne. He left Agra and proceeded towards Lahore. It is said that at Taran Taran Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, also gave him his blessings. The fugitive prince was pursued and defeated near Bharowal and when he was trying to cross the Chenab the imperialists captured him along with several of his companions. The prince was put behind the bars while severe punishments were awarded to his followers. “Guru Arjun Dev was asked to pay a fine of two lakhs of rupees and when he refused to pay that fine he was tortured to death. The death of the Guru turned the Hindus in general and the Sikhs in particular against the Mughal empire and during Aurangzeb's reign they rose into open rebellion.” A little later Khusrau was blinded when he tried to rebel once again and in 1622 A.D. he was assassinated at the instance of Prince Khurram (Shah Jahan) who wanted to clear his way for the Mughal throne.

(3) *Execution of Guru Arjun Dev, 1606 A.D.* As mentioned above, Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, had helped prince Khusrau when the latter was roaming about in the Punjab as fugitive. Jahangir could not tolerate this. He considered the Guru guilty of supporting a rebel. A heavy fine of about two lakhs of rupees was imposed on the Guru which he refused to pay. Consequently, he was put to death. The death of Guru Arjun Dev greatly estranged the relations of the Sikhs and the Mughals and the former took up arms against them during the reign of Aurangzeb.

(4) *Revolt in Bengal, 1614-15 A.D.* The Afghans of Bengal had no doubt submitted to the Mughals but they were ever on the look-out of regaining their independence. In 1614, Usman Khan, the Governor of Bengal, raised a standard of revolt. He was, however, defeated and killed by the imperial forces in 1615. Thus peace was restored in Bengal.

(5) *War with Mewar, 1614 A.D.* With all his resources Akbar could not conquer the whole of Mewar, Jahangir was naturally very anxious of conquering that state and with this aim in mind he sent various expeditions (in 1605, 1608 and 1609) against Mewar, but because of the mutual jealousies of the Mughal generals nothing definite could be achieved. At last, in 1614 A.D. Prince Khurram fought a successful war against Amar Singh, the son and the successor of Maharana Pratap and the very next year a treaty was signed between the Rana and Jahangir. According to this treaty the Rana accepted the suzerainty of Jahangir who in return restored to him all the territories, including Chittor, which the Mughals had seized from him and his ancestors since the days of Akbar. The Rana was not forced to enter into any matrimonial alliance with the Mughals nor he was asked to attend the Mughal court in person. Because of his generous treatment Jahangir won the loyalty of the Rana of Mewar and thus the old feud between Mewar and Delhi was happily patched up.

(6) *Deccan Policy or Deccan Campaigns of Jahangir 1608-21 A.D.* Akbar had conquered Ahmadnagar in 1600 A.D., but in 1608 A.D. it declared its independence under the able guidance of Malik Ambar, the Abyssinian Prime Minister of the Nizam Shahi ruler of Ahmadnagar. Several expeditions were sent against this state but without any real advantage. In 1617 A.D. Prince Khurram, however, got a partial success against Malik Ambar but a few years later Ahmadnagar once again declared its independence. Prince Khurram was once again sent against Ahmadnagar, but because of the developing estrangement between him and Nur Jahan he hurriedly concluded a treaty with Malik Ambar without much gain. One historian has rightly remarked, "Nothing could concede the stern reality that the expenditure of millions of rupees and thousands of lives had not advanced the Mughal frontiers a single inch beyond the frontiers of 1605."

(7) *Conquest of Kangra, 1622 A.D. In 1620 A.D.* Prince Khurram led an expedition against the well-known fort of Kangra, which remained unconquered during Akbar's reign and conquered it after a siege of about 14 months.

(8) *Loss of Kandhar, 1622 A.D.* Akbar had conquered Kandhar from the Persians in 1595 A.D. but they never forgot the loss of their invaluable province and even thought of recapturing it. By flattery and rich presents the Shah of Iran (Shah Abbas) diverted the attention of Jahangir to other sides and in 1622 A.D. he abruptly attacked Kandhar and captured it. Jahangir had a great mind of re-conquering Kandhar but due to the rebellion of Prince Khurram he could achieve nothing and Kandhar was lost for the time being.

(9) *Revolt of Prince Khurram, 1623-25 A.D.* When Nur Jahan got her daughter Ladli Begum (by her first husband Sher Afghan) married to Prince Shahryar, the youngest son of Jahangir, she turned against Prince Khurram and tried to secure the throne for her son-in-law. Her plots ultimately led Prince Khurram to raise a standard of revolt against his father in 1623 A.D. After good deal of dramatic scene for about two years, reconciliation was brought about between the father and the son. Khurram was sent to the Deccan where he remained till the death of his father. (For details see next section).

(10) *Revolt of Mahabat Khan, 1626 A.D.* Nur Jahan's plots and intrigues also led Jahangir's faithful general Mahabat Khan to rise in revolt against the Mughal monarch in 1626 A.D. The general was successful for some time but ultimately he surrendered. Keeping his past services in view, Jahangir pardoned him. Mahabat Khan then went towards the Deccan where he was joined by Prince Khurram.

(11) *Coming of European Travellers.* During Jahangir's reign various European travellers visited India, the chief among them were, however, William Hawkins and Sir Thomas Roe. William Hawkins visited India in 1608 A.D. as a representative of King James I of England. He remained in India for about three years (1608-11). Jahangir was so pleased with him that he conferred on him a Mansab of 400. He had left behind him a vivid account of Jahangir's character, his habits, administration, annual income and had thrown a good deal of light on the Mughal court. Sir Thomas Roe was another English traveller who visited the Mughal empire during the period of Jahangir. He remained in the Mughal court for three year (1615-18 A.D.) and succeeded to some extent in getting concessions for the English traders. The English got the permission for setting up a factory at Surat. They were also allowed to trade at that port. Sir Thomas Roe was both a scholar and a politician. He wrote a lot about Jahangir, the splendour of his court and his grand parties in which the nobles took part in large numbers. But the picture which he draws of the general condition and administration of the country is not a very attractive one. The administration was not so efficient and the merchants were so often harassed at the ports. The control of the Central Government over the provinces was not so effective. The roads were insecure. The people were, however, very hospitable and held the foreigners in great esteem.

(12) *Death of Jahangir, 28th Oct., 1627 A.D.* Because of excess of drinking Jahangir greatly lost his health and when he was returning from Kashmir he died (at Bhimber), on 28th Oct., 1627. He was buried at Shahdara near Lahore and later on a beautiful tomb was erected there by his son Shah Jahan.

**Jahangir's Character and Personality**

Jahangir is one of the most interesting and complex figure in the Mughal history. He was a combination of vices and virtues and that is why some historians call him a "mixture of two opposites." According to Dr. V.A. Smith he was, "a strange compound of tenderness and cruelty, justice and caprice, refinement and brutality, good sense and childishness."

**(A) Bright Side of Jahangir's Character**- Most of the European writers had found more faults in Jahangir's character but such was not the real picture. In fact, his qualities were far greater than his faults. Jahangir possessed some such qualities as were not to be found in his contemporaries.

(1) *4 Kind and Affectionate Man.* Jahangir was a very kind and affectionate man and his treatment with the poor and the destitute was highly appreciable. He had established free hospitals for the poor and was often seen distributing free gifts among them. He was an affectionate man who had great love for his children, wives and other relatives.

(2) *An able Ruler.* Jahangir was an able ruler who wished the welfare of his subjects and tried his utmost to promote their material as well as moral interests. Soon after his accession to the throne he carried out various praiseworthy reforms. Various vexatious taxes were removed. severe punishments like the cutting of nose and ears were abolished and various Sarais were built and wells were dug for the welfare of his subjects.

(3) *A Great Lover of Justice.* Jahangir is greatly renowned for his great love of justice. "The first order that I gave" he writes, "was for fastening up the chain of justice." This chain bearing 60 bells could be pulled by the humblest of his subjects to bring their complaints to the notice of the emperor. He gave even-handed justice to all his subjects and spared neither princes nor nobles when they were found guilty of any crime. Once he remarked: "God forbids that in such cases, I should consider Princes and far less I should consider Amirs." As a result of these measures law and order was fully maintained even in the remotest part, of the empire.

(4) *A Religious Tolerant.* Jahangir, like his illustrious father Akbar, was tolerant towards other faiths. He followed his father in his policy towards the Hindus and the Rajputs. He freely mixed with the Hindu Yogis and paid sev eral visits to Jadrup, a renowned Hindu ascetic of Ujjain. He was equally tolerant towards the Christians and encouraged the artists to adorn his impe rial palace with the statutes of the Christian saints. Though a strict Muslim unlike his father, it goes to his credit that like him he never persecuted the other religions.

(5) *An Able Statesman.* Jahangir was an able statesman and like his father he did not antagonise the Rajputs. He maintained them on high posts and concluded matrimonial alliances with them. Raja Man Singh and Mirza Aziz Koka had opposed his accession to the throne, but after becoming the ruler, he forgave them and won them for ever to his side. Again, by treating Rana Amar Singh of Mewar in an honourable way, Jahangir showed himself to be a clever statesman and won the allegiance of the Sisodia dynasty which had not so far professed allegiance to any Mughal emperor.

(6) *A Capable General.* Jahangir was an enthusiastic hunter, a fine shot and a capable general who could plan and lead military campaigns. He suc cessfully suppressed the revolts and conquered many territories such as Mewar, Kangra and Ahmadnagar.

(7) *A Great Scholar and Patron of Literature.* Jahangir was a great scholar and had a great mastery over Persian, Turki and Hindi. His Memoirs or autobiography known as *'Turk-i-Jahangiri'* is a unique piece of literature which shows his power of expression, scientific spirit and accuracy of his observations at his best. Jahangir was also a great patron of scholars. Some of the great scholars who flourished in his court were Abdullah Dehlvi, Niymatullah and Mirza Ghias Beg, etc.

(8) *A Lover of Art, Nature and Beauty.* Jahangir was a great lover of art. Various great arts like painting, music and architecture flourished during his reign. He himself was an enthusiastic painter and simply seeing the different paintings he could tell the names of their authors. He was equally interested in architecture and among other buildings Akbar's Tomb at Sikandra, and Tomb of Itmad-ud-Daula at Agra were the most notable buildings that were erected during his period.

Jahangir was also a great lover of nature and beauty. His description of the beauties of nature, of brooks and rivers, flowers and fruits, birds and animals, valleys and mountains, beggars description was remarkable. He had a great liking for Kashmir because of its wonderful falls and sparking springs. He laid out the Nishat and Shalimar gardens near Srinagar which still greatly add to our pleasure.

**(B) Dark side of Jahangir's Character**- Jahangir had some defects in his character which had completely over-shadowed his qualities.

(1) *His Habit of Drinking.* Jahangir's main defect was his addiction to wine. He began drinking wine at the age of 18 and soon became a slave of this habit. He began to take as many as twenty cups a day. This habit completely ruined his health and made him quite lazy and indolent. Under the influence of Nur Jahan he greatly reduced this habit and began taking wine only at night.

(2) *Lover of Ease and Pleasure.* Jahangir was also addicted to ease and sexual pleasures. He spent much of his time in his harem and completely ignored the state business. In this way he not only added to his difficulties but also greatly harmed the general tone of the administration.

(3) *Habit of Falling under Others Control.* Another great defect in Jahangir's character was his natural habit of falling under others' influence. As a prince he was under the influence of his companions who prompted him to revolt against his father. Later on, Nur Jahan and her brother Asaf Khan dominated him so completely that he delegated all his powers to them and accepted their decisions like a slave. Such a dependence on Nur Jahan and others led to some serious revolts during his reign.

(4) *Capricious and Cruel Nature.* Ordinarily Jahangir was just and kind but sometimes he proved nothing less than a capricious and cruel man. Sometimes he was needlessly cruel and inflicted punishment entirely disproportionate to the offences committed.

It is because of the strange combination of the above-mentioned qualities and defects in Jahangir's character that some historians call him as the "Mixture of Two Opposites" and a "Talented Drunkard"