

The Portrayal of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb
in Modern History Writing

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of MA South Asian Area Studies of the
School of Oriental and African Studies
(University of London)

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15th September 1998

ABSTRACT

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1998

THE PORTRAYAL OF THE MUGHAL EMPEROR AURANGZEB IN MODERN HISTORY WRITING.

Aurangzeb (r.1658-1707) is depicted as an extremely oppressive ruler by many historians, who have simultaneously portrayed him as a fanatical Muslim. They claim that by imposing Islamic law on the institutions of the Mughal empire, Aurangzeb alienated the overwhelming Hindu populace, which eventually proved fatal to the empire. The exploitation of Aurangzeb's image provides modern elites with a politically useful tool to manipulative religious sentiment by creating powerful symbols. Some historians even go so far as to blame Aurangzeb for the poor inter-religious relations in present-day South Asia.

However, the seventeenth century in Indian history was when aspiring regional peasant groups like the Sikhs, Jats and Marathas started with increasing success to challenge the dominance of the traditional landed elites. The impact of socio-economic factors on centre-periphery conflicts during this period, provides a strong case for academic debate on whether Aurangzeb's religious policies were a cause or the result of increased class/caste struggles. Here in this dissertation, by studying various material on both general Mughal history and specific Aurangzeb related topics, an attempt is made at determining the reasons for the conflicting historical portrayals of him.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The sixth and last of the 'great' Mughal Emperors, Abul Muzaffar Muhi-ud-din Muhammad Aurangzeb Alamgir Badshah Ghazi (b.1618-d.1707) is without any doubt, the most controversial personality in India's history. Only Aurangzeb's own great-grandfather the third Mughal Emperor Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar (r.1556-1605) can approach him in the controversy stakes as a distant second. Why is this the case with Aurangzeb? Is the one main reason that provided the essential inspiration to embark on this particular dissertation.

Aurangzeb, the third son of the fifth Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (r.1628-1658) and his Shia Irani wife Muntaz Mahal, came to occupy the throne after a long bitter war of succession. So the controversy surrounding Aurangzeb is not just limited to the actual years of his reign. As Aurangzeb (r.1658-1707) is generally considered as the last effective Mughal Emperor and his successors failed to hold their empire together as it soon broke up into regional kingdoms. Can it be argued that Aurangzeb's policies began the process of Mughal decline?

a. Comparsion of secondary source literature.

Various historians [eg. Alhaq(1996), Agrawal (1983), Wolpert (1993),...] have portrayed Aurangzeb as a religious fanatic, who tried to impose an utopian Islamic state on an overwhelming Hindu majority populace. They have placed Aurangzeb in a special category with other alleged bigoted rulers like Mahmud of Ghazni (r.998-1030), Alaudin Khalji (r.1296-1316) and Sikandar Lodi (r.1489-1517). Aurangzeb is contrasted with Akbar and is described as lacking the qualities that make a great emperor. The wisdom and tolerance of Akbar are magnified while Aurangzeb is ascribed demonic attributes. At the very other extreme, some historians [eg. Faruki (1935), K. J.Ahmad (1984)] perhaps overreacting to the earlier mentioned stance, glorify Aurangzeb as the ideal Muslim ruler or even far as describing him as a living saint (*Zinda Pir*).

While others (eg. those from the Aligarh School) have drawn their attention to the grewing tensions that inflicted the contemporary socio-economic environment, in

order to explain the course of major events leading to and during Aurangzeb's turbulent forty-nine year reign. So an attempt has been made to classify historians and their numerous works into different categories and sub-categories in the succeeding sections of this dissertation. Why does there exist such a wide disparity between historians who write on Aurangzeb? Is there a particular reason responsible for each individual historian's representation of him?

In order to attempt to answer the above questions, a wide spectrum of works primarily associated with Aurangzeb but also on what may at first appear as distantly related subjects was studied. General works on Islamic and Indian history were consulted in order to develop a wider understanding. Regional, military and caste histories were taken into consideration so that important details could not be missed. Sometimes studying certain works in complete isolation and then in comparative analysis with other often very conflicting accounts of Aurangzeb.

In the course of this dissertation, there was a strong concern to focus attention on a certain aspect of social history during Aurangzeb's lifetime. The complex interrelationship between the Muslim Aurangzeb and the largely Hindu caste of locally based warrior elites of northern and central India collectively known as Rajputs, would provide an appropriate basis to work with. This choice is central to the subject concerning the portrayals of Aurangzeb's policies on Hindu-Muslim relations for this period.

In India during this period stretching from mid-seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries, many other great leaders also existed. Some of them like the Pathan poet Khushal Khan who also was the tribal chief of the Khattaks, the Maratha warlord Shivaji Bhonsle and the last Sikh Guru Gobind Singh, provided exceptionally stiff opposition to Aurangzeb. Yet Aurangzeb was able to withstand their challenges to his long rule, partly because he employed outstanding generals like the Hindu Rajput Mirza Jai Singh Kachawa and the Shia Iranis Mir Jumla, Asad Khan and Asad Khan's son Zulfikar Khan. Without studying the history of other great contemporary figures, the significance of Aurangzeb's place in Indian history is not fully realised.

The political institutions and social structures of the Mughal empire provide a framework for the Mughal Emperor to operate within. To what extent do Islamic and secular traditions fuse, differ or clash is considered by some historians of various different backgrounds to be dependent solely on the Mughal sovereign's personality. Is the Mughal empire just an autocracy or is it an aristocracy in which the emperor is only the representative of the largest and most powerful section of the nobility?

The truth probably lies somewhere between these two extremes and perhaps its precise location differs for each individual emperor. So do changes especially those of an ideological nature originate at the level of emperor and then filter down the power structure or does this process work in the reverse direction? Here in this dissertation, we are specifically concerned with the portrayal of Aurangzeb's ideological leanings and to what extent the actual quest for change was internal or external. To what extent were these ideological leanings enhanced or compromised by the existing status quo.

One may define this historiographical dissertation as a rather elaborate intellectual exercise dealing with the use and abuse of a history confined to a specified region and period (seventeenth century India). The construction of various identities based on multiple factors plays a vital part in history writing and this process also makes history writing itself a powerful influence on society. So issues nearer to our own period like orientalism, ethno-religious nationalism and communalism are very difficult to escape from. Thus throughout this research, these controversial themes will thus be given their due importance. It will be interesting to observe how history writing on this particular topic has evolved over the last half century and the major shifts that have occurred.

b. study of primary sources in translation

Several translated publications consisting of substantial primary source material have been studied for this subsection. Among them are:-Jadunath Sarkar's '*Anecdotes of Aurangzib*' which he claims to have translated from *Ahkam i Alamgiri* which is ascribed to Hamid ud din Khan Bahadur (Nimcha) ; '*Letters of Aurangzeb*' (

Ruka'at i Alamgiri) by Jamshid H. Bilimoria ; The Military Despatches of a Seventeenth Century Indian General (*Haft Anjuman* written by Munshi Udairaj alias Tale'yar Khan) trans. by Jagadish Narayan Sarkar. In addition, a scholarly contribution by Sajida Alvi (1976:57-73) on this particular topic has been included.

Before the above are considered, a translation of a letter from Aurangzeb to the Rana of Mewar, Raj Singh Sisodia, written during the succession war, is studied.

' Because the persons of the great kings are shadows of God, the attention of this elevated class (of kings), who are the pillars of the great court, is devoted to this, that men belonging to various communities and different religions should live in the vale of peace and pass their days in prosperity, and no one should interfere in the affairs of another. Any one of this sky-glorious group (of kings) who resorted to intolerance, became the cause of dispute and conflict and of harm to the people at large, who are indeed a trust received from God: in reality (such a king) thereby endeavoured to devastate the prosperous creations of God and destroy the foundations of the God-created fabric, which is a habit deserving to be rejected and cast off. God willing, when the true cause (i.e. Aurangzeb's own cause) is successful, and the wishes of the sincerely loyal ones are fulfilled, the benefits of the revered practices and established regulations of my great ancestors, who are so much esteemed by the worshipful ones, will cast lustre on the four-cornered inhabited world.'

(Source:- Ali, Athar 1995:269).

This is the most complete translation of a letter by Aurangzeb that I have seen. Athar Ali appears not to have greatly changed its context in the process of translation. This letter shows the sheer extent to which Aurangzeb was prepared to go through, in order to enlist the military services of leading Rajput noblemen, in his quest for the throne. From the letter, we deduce that Aurangzeb tries to borrow on traditions common to both Mughal and Rajput notions of kingship such as 'Divine Light'. A basic definition of secularism is evident from the letter.

Jamshid Bilimoria's collection of letters is composed of entirely of Aurangzeb's letters to his sons and Muslim mansabdars. Not a single letter in this collection is of the standard of the one sent to Rana Raj Singh of Mewar. Yet, there are no letters calling for the maltreatment of Hindus or blaming Hindus for causing political disorder in the empire. It is interesting to note that Aurangzeb omits the suffix *ji* when mentioning Shivaji. By referring to Shivaji as just simply Shiv, Bilimoria says that Aurangzeb is not showing him the due respect that a Hindu of such standing deserves. In contrary to popular belief, Aurangzeb never describes his adversary Shivaji in these letters as the 'Mountain Rat'.

Bilimoria's explanatory notes are full of claims, that these letters have a implicit sectarian bias. Bilimoria (1908:v) had heavily relied on the works of Sir Henry Miers Elliot for his commentary. Sir Henry Miers Elliot and later John Dowson had translated a large of Persian manuscripts, into a famous eight volume publication 'History of India as Told by its Own Historians (the Muhammadan Period)'. The specially selected manuscripts were often wrongly translated and as to show Hindus that the Turko-Afghans as oppressive rulers and British as liberators. (Rizvi 1987: xxiv-xxv).

In his forward of the *Anecdotes of Aurangzeb*, Jadunath Sarkar (1988) refers to Aurangzeb as '*A puritan, and a bigot at that, and in some ways a mixture of opposites*'. Despite such opening comments, the publication contains some useful information. An extract of Aurangzeb's will is provided, which contains advice to his sons about ruling India. Here, Aurangzeb briefly the merits and drawbacks of certain races who make up the Mughal nobility. For instance, Aurangzeb says he has superme confidence in Iranis, they are the most capable and trustworthy of mansabdars. (Sarkar 1988:36). In a reply to a Sunni Turani mansabdar who feels his promotion prospects are impeded by the by the emperor's favouritism towards Shia Iranis, Aurangzeb writes that religious belief is not linked to worldly matters. (Sarkar 1988:68).

However, Aurangzeb advises his sons to maintain friendly relations with the Sayyids of Barha yet he warns them not to get too much involved with this holy clan. This shows that Aurangzeb was a good judge of character, for the Barha Sayyids dominated and even killed some of the later Mughal emperors. Aurangzeb usually tells his sons to respect veteran mansabdars and to overlook their minor faults. (Bilimoria 1908, Sarkar 1988).

In the comparative study of three medieval sources for Aurangzeb, only the work *Maasir i Alamgiri* by Muhammad Saqi Mustaid Khan, explicitly refers to temple destruction. (Alvi 1976:57-73). According to Sajida Alvi (1976:57), Aurangzeb is believed to have stopped the patronage of history writing in the tenth year of his

reign, in order to reduce government expenditure. All three of the contemporary historians mention with delight that Aurangzeb cleansed Islam from Akbari practices. K.M. Panikhar (1960) appears to be correct when he says that, a distorted concept of Turko-Afghan rule is constructed if we rely just on court chroniclers. Court historians nearly always depict their patrons as being the upholders of the shariah. Tales of temple and idol destruction, forced conversion and massacres, frequent their writing. Thus, Aurangzeb can't be blamed for stopping state sponsorship of history writing.

Perhaps the most useful primary sources are the correspondences between the Emperor and his leading mansabdars. Jagadish N Sarkar's *'The Military Despatches of a Seventeenth Century Indian General'* (1969), is much more interesting and useful publication than that of Bilimoria (1908). J D Sarkar is concerned with the crucial moments of Mirza Raja Jai Singh's campaigns in the Deccan. Jai Singh, who was Aurangzeb's most competent military commander, was sent to defeat Shivaji and conquer Bijapur. (Richards 1993:209).

Many previously little known or unknown details are written in these despatches. Jai Singh maintains an extremely strong tie of loyalty towards the Emperor, he never considers a grand Hindu alliance of Rajputs and Marathas but Aurangzeb was still suspicious. (Sarkar 1969:17-19). As Jai Singh had failed to defeat the Bijapuri army, Aurangzeb recalled him. Jai Singh's victory against Shivaji was overshadowed by the Bijapur failure. Jai Singh eagerly wanted to follow one impressive victory by another, he had advised the emperor not to visit him as he was capable of performing the assigned military task. (Sarkar 1969:22-27). Aurangzeb's recall of Jai Singh from the Deccan, did not mean that Aurangzeb had lost all confidence in him. (Sarkar 1969:40). Jai Singh did not realise that Aurangzeb had further plans for him, Jai Singh died a disappointed man. J N Sarkar firmly puts to rest rumours that Aurangzeb had poisoned his highest ranking mansabdar. (ibid.).

The causes for Jai Singh's failure are manifold. The expedition was under funded, the artillery failed to perform efficiently. The Mughal army suffered from indiscipline. It took Aurangzeb some eighteen months to conquer Bijapur and this was not achieved by superior might. As the majority of the Sultan of Bijapur's army were Pathans

(1969:105), a Pathan general of the Mughal army, offered them safe conduct and lucrative posts if they changed sides. Aurangzeb had underestimated the difficulties faced by Jai Singh. J N Sarkar appears to be justified, when he says that one of Aurangzeb's flaws was that he sometimes overestimated the Mughal army's capability.

c. Comparison of primary and secondary literature.

Original primary source materials are usually narrative but leave the readers free to do their own analysis. The same can not be said for translated versions, as the translator is selective and mixes his or her analysis with the translated text. In order to utilize translations, selection on the part of the reader is also required. The inputs for both pro-Aurangzeb and anti-Aurangzeb secondary source writing can be traced in translations of primary sources. This makes the task of a student of history somewhat more difficult than initially realised.

2. Trends in Islamic Discourse in the Seventeenth Century Mughal India.

a. The Legacy of Emperor Shah Jahan r. 1628-1658.

A brief study of Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb's illustrious predecessor, is helpful in developing a better understanding of Aurangzeb. As certain negative characteristics of Aurangzeb, which are often highlighted by some historians, can also be easily traced in his father Shah Jahan. However in Shah Jahan's case, the same historians (eg. Iyer & Chawla 1983:294-318) have usually chosen to ignore them.

Shah Jahan was the third son of his father, the Emperor Jahangir (r.1605-1627). Shah Jahan had become Emperor after winning an extremely bloody war of succession, in which he had all his brothers, nephews and male first-cousins put to death. (Rizvi 1987:120). Shah Jahan was an excessively ambitious man in all his endeavours. Shah Jahan occasionally resorted to Islamic sentiment when it provided him with political advantage but in comparison to Aurangzeb, he was not so deeply inclined to religion itself.

During the Bundela Rajput rebellion that occurred in the early part of his reign, Shah Jahan ordered the destruction of the colossal Orcha temple and its idols. Ironically, the Orcha temple was built by one of Jahangir's most loyalist mansabdars, Raja Vir Singh Dev. A Mosque was constructed on the Orcha temple's site and some rebel Bundelas were forcefully converted to Islam. In addition, Sri Ram Sharma (1962:86-87) mentions that in the most sacred Hindu city of Benares, Shah Jahan had new temples demolished by enforcing Shariah restrictions. Shah Jahan had clearly departed from previous Mughal practice and so set new precedents for further acts of violence.

Shah Jahan best known to most students of Indian history for his unmatched patronage of exquisite architecture, had a equally powerful but less often mentioned desire to expand the frontiers of the Mughal empire. Massive military expeditions were sent in both northerly and southerly directions. The Mughal scheme to conquer their Timurid ancestral regions in the Uzbek controlled parts of Central Asia proved to be a costly failure in terms of both personnel and financial resources.

Faruki (1935) pointed out that only the brilliant generalship skills displaced by Aurangzeb, during temporary victories over the formidable Uzbeks, kept Mughal military prestige intact.

Mughal southerly expansion was however comparatively more successful. Although, Shah Jahan's father-in-law the wazir Asaf Khan had failed to take the premier Deccan state of Bijapur, the smaller Nizam Shahi kingdom of Ahmadnagar was forcefully absorbed into the Mughal empire in 1632. Aurangzeb seems to have inherited the Shah Jahan's powerful urge to annex the remaining Deccan kingdoms.

b. The War of Succession.

The two year long Succession war between Shah Jahan's four sons has received special attention from various scholars (eg. Richards 1993:151-153, Misra 1993) as it has usually been seen as an ideological contest. Shah Jahan's eldest son Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb are portrayed as being representatives of opposing theology. While the other two princes Shuja and Murad are accorded relatively insignificant roles.

The heir-apparent Dara Shukoh, who was his father's favourite son, lacked Aurangzeb's formidable military talent. Therefore, Shah Jahan had to reluctantly acknowledge that the gifted Aurangzeb was the Mughal empire's best general and so usually sent Aurangzeb on military expeditions or appointed him to governorships of politically instable provinces. Such demanding experiences enhanced Aurangzeb's military prowess and his reputation as a leader of warriors.

Dara is portrayed by the historian Shuja Alhaq (1996), as being blessed with a philosophical mind that was open to different religious traditions. Dara had even learnt Sanskrit in order to translate Hindu sacred texts into Persian so as to improve interfaith relations. However, C.E. Bosworth (1980:212) describes that in seventeenth century India, the differences between various religious communities was becoming more pronounced. As both Muslim and Hindu revivalist movements were gaining in strength, Dara's task was far from easy.

This point is supported by the leading American scholar of Mughal India, John F. Richards (1993:164), who doubts if Dara's liberal ideas could have been successful in such a polarised religious environment. In some quarters Dara was seen as the heir to the 'heretical' legacy of Akbar and Jahangir's rebel son Khusrau.

Dara lacked his main rival's immense ability for political manipulation. He was a poor judge of character, even his maternal uncle, the Shia Irani general Shaista Khan, whom Dara greatly trusted, was secret supporter of Aurangzeb. (Misra 1993:122). So despite having the imperial army under his command and the public endorsement of Shah Jahan, Dara was bound to lose his quest for the throne.

Aurangzeb is generally blamed by many historians for using religious mobilization as a rallying call during the succession war but Rizvi (1987:132) disputes this claim, by insisting that both Murad and Shuja abused religious sentiment as a political tool against Dara, to a greater extent than Aurangzeb. Therefore, in such a competitive climate, Aurangzeb had to appeal to the Muslim religious establishment's approval but at the same time, he could not afford to alienate Hindu Rajput mansabdars.

c. The Ulama.

The historians Janaki Iyer and Veena Chawla (1983:298-299) argue that Aurangzeb considered India as being *dar-ul-harb* (abode of war or non-belief) and wanted to convert it to *dar-ul-Islam* (abode of Islam) by imposing Islamic laws on a largely Hindu population. They claim that Aurangzeb was so inclined, as he had become influenced by the 'puritanical' doctrines of the Naqshbandi Sufi-Alim Mujadid Alif Sani Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi (b.1564-d.1624). During Aurangzeb's almost half century long reign, there was no renowned individual Alim/Sufi like Sirhindi or Shah Wali Allah.

However, Julian Baldick's (1989:122-123) view contrasts sharply with that of Iyer and Chawla (1983), as he says that soon after imposing jizyah, Aurangzeb prohibited the works of Sirhindi and his followers. Ironically, the reinforcement of jizyah on Hindus was a major demand of the Sirhindi camp.

Perhaps due to political expediency, Aurangzeb did not wish to be restricted by ulama domination but did appease them as he used their religious rulings to legitimize the executions of Dara, Dara's eldest son Sulayman Shukoh and Shivaji's successor Shambhaji. Athar Ali (1966:97) provides details of the most important religious ruling used by Aurangzeb, was that he had the right to rule even while his father was still alive, because he exceeded all others in sheer ability.

3a. J N Sarkar and R C Majumdar: Two selective Hindu communalist historians.

For the older generation of South Asian intellectuals, much of their historical knowledge is derived from the works of eminent Hindu Bengali historians like Sir Jadunath Sarkar and R C Majumdar. Sir Jadunath Sarkar (b.1870-d.1958) has produced more works on Aurangzeb and topics related to Aurangzeb, than any other author. Even John F. Richards (1993:306) considers Sarkar's five volume biography of Aurangzeb, as the most authoritative and comprehensive text on the topic. This is probably because Sarkar was a very talented historian blessed with phenomenal linguistic skills (Persian, Rajasthani, Hindi/Urdu and Marathi). Similarly, the subject of Sarkar's study, Aurangzeb was well versed in several languages (Arabic, Persian, Turkic and Hindi). (Sarkar 1974:363).

In recent years, an increasing number of historians have begun to question the detailed accounts of Aurangzeb in Sarkar's publications. The leading American historian of Mughal architecture, Catherine B. Asher (1992) even goes to the extent that she dismisses Sarkar's narrative 'History of Aurangzeb' as a mere collection of myths. Perhaps Sarkar's prejudiced attitude to towards his subject causes historians to lose faith in his works. Originally written during the Nationalist period, the fifth volume even contains a chapter (1974:362-378), '*Aurangzeb and Indian Nationality*' which includes sub-sections titled '*Differences in life and ideal makes fusion of Hindus and Muhammadan impossible.*' (1974:368-370) ; '*Hindus politically depressed and degraded under Aurangzeb.*' (1974:370-371). The concluding sub-section is titled '*The Significance of Aurangzeb's reign: how an Indian nationality can be formed.*' (1974:377-378). These titles in themselves illustrate that Sarkar was allowing his political opinions to influence his historical writings. Such attempts to link medieval historical events with modern political concepts like nationalism, does not help scholars to understand the issues relevant to Aurangzeb.

Yet, Sarkar does not always assign negative attributes to Aurangzeb. Sarkar praises Aurangzeb for his courage and coolness of mind during extremely difficult periods. Such personal characteristics are described by Sarkar as usually belonging to Northern Europeans. Despite an element of orientalism, this is perhaps one of the best descriptions of Aurangzeb that any author has made.

Another historian regarded as being in the same category as Jadunath Sarkar, is R C Majumdar. Majumdar, the general editor of a massive eleven volume history of India, headed many of India's most prestigious associations of professional historians. This gave Majumdar the position of India's leading historian, it was difficult to challenge his works as they were regarded as the standard text. In the preface of the volume on Mughal India, Majumdar (1974:xiv) blames the Mughal emperors especially Aurangzeb for being bigots, who should be held responsible for destroying their own empire by alienating the Hindu majority. However, Majumdar (1974:xv) regards Aurangzeb as a competent administer and brilliant general who unified almost all of India's territories under a single state structure. This military achievement of Aurangzeb, is sometimes paradoxically praised by Hindu nationalists as it provides them for a precedent for the forceful unification of mainland South Asia. It is then not surprising that Majumdar as a latent Hindu nationalist focuses on this particular aspect of Aurangzeb's reign.

In his last publication '*Main Currents of Indian History*', Majumdar (1984:163) describes Aurangzeb as being combination of contradictions. Majumdar's own writings on Aurangzeb, can also be described as a mix of opposites. Aurangzeb is simultaneously regarded by Majumdar as being pious, relatively free of personal vices, but suspicious and full of craftiness. However, Majumdar chooses to emphasis the negative traits in Aurangzeb's character. Majumdar (1984:164) writes that Aurangzeb was relieved when his most distinguished senior military commanders (Mirza Rajah Jai Singh, Rajah Jaswant Singh Rathore and Mir Jumla) died. Why this should be the case, Majumdar does not explain. If it did provide Aurangzeb with more freedom to dominate the mansabdari system or impose unpopular state policies then Majumdar should refer to such instances. Did the death of Rajah Jaswant Singh Rathore of Marwar in 1679, clear the path later in the same year, for Aurangzeb to reimpose jizyah on his non-Muslim subjects ? Majumdar deliberately avoids facing such questions but says only that Aurangzeb was relieved by the news of his death.

Both Jadunath Sarkar and R C Majumdar treat the Bundela, Jat, Maratha, Marwar, Satnami and Sikh revolts as a part of a wider national liberation struggle against the

brutalities of the Mughals. They consider the Mughals as being foreign tyrannical rulers. The Mughals were the paramount authority in seventeenth century India but unlike the later British, they had integrated into Indian society. Despite this major distinction, Sarkar and Majumdar place the Mughals and the British in the same category as these two military powers were once India's non-Hindu paramount authorities. Also, these two Hindu Bengali authors fail to explain, by imposing their Hindu communalist concept of nationalism on medieval India, why Muslim regional powers rebelled against the Mughal controlled central structure.

Prior to India's partition in 1947, R C Majumdar was the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University, perhaps because of the trauma of enforced migration, Majumdar tended to be more inclined towards Hindu communalism in his later life than he had been before. Jadunath Sarkar began to write his famous five volume work '*History of Aurangzeb*' when the debate regarding the partition of Bengal had reached its climax, Sarkar's history writings become political weapons by making Aurangzeb's name synonymous with Muslim oppression of Hindus.

Perhaps, the strong link of Hindu-Muslim enmity in post-mutiny British India with Aurangzeb's image, can be best shown by the following quotation of Aligarh's first principal Mr. Beck :-

"A friendship between the British people and Muslims was possible, but not between Muslims and followers of other religions ; for example, the followers of Shivaji and those of Guru Govind Singh would never agree with the Muslims in accepting Aurangzeb as their hero."
(Srivastava 1974:16).

This point was emphasised to a greater degree than even the prospect of a Hindu dominated central government. Religious antagonism between India's major communities helped to prolong imperial rule, the colonial state was portraying itself to the Muslim minority as its protectors. When Muslim elites read Sarkar's biased publications, they actually began to believe that the colonial authorities were safeguarding their interests.

Ironically, Anjali Chatterjee (1967) comments that Bengali Hindus did not revolt during Aurangzeb's reign. Bengali Hindu society lacked the strong internal cohesion

of Rajput or Jat society. The Kayasths, a scribal caste, to which both Sarkar and Majumdar belonged, were sometimes even promoted to the ranks of large zamindars by the Mughals. So unlike Sikh Jat authors (eg. Grewal 1990), their own ancestral communities did not suffer. Yet, Sarkar and Majumdar exceed Grewal (1990) in their condemnation of Aurangzeb.

So why were these historians accorded such high academic prestige? During the period of the nationalist struggle against British rule, their writings were the only popular alternatives available to historical novels. For instance, Bankim Chatterjee describes Aurangzeb as someone who was born to hate Hindus, only the love for a Hindu maid in the palace, softened Aurangzeb's hard-line stance against Hindus.(Sarkar 1996:182). Sufia Ahmed (1974) believes that Muslims felt alienated from Indian nationalism because of the Hindu novelist's portrayal of Muslim rulers as being prone to irrational violence and insatiable lust.

3b. The Aligarh School.

Here, the specialist works of the Aligarh School are studied. The focus of Satish Chandra's '*Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and Deccan*' is the interrelations between the Mughals and the principal non-Muslim martial communities. The contemporary scene is explored before Aurangzeb's religious inclination is dealt with. This approach warrants acclaim, otherwise important details are overlooked. The importance of Islamization is accorded a minimum value. The Mughals including Aurangzeb are considered as political realists, religious dogma in itself is of secondary importance to them. The Mughal interaction with Rajputs was essentially secular in orientation and was also a class alliance, the Marathas being of recent peasant origins found to difficult to assimilate into the Mughal high culture. (Chandra 1993:151).

The Mughal Emperors required a thorough knowledge of the Rajput clan structure and its internal politics. It is surprising to learn from this book that Rajput Rajahs did not attain their proper deserved high ranking mansabs (above 5000 zat) during the reigns of Jahangir and his son Shah Jahan. (Sharma 1962:109). The Rajputs during this period of fifty-three years lost out to the Iranis. It was Aurangzeb who restored the position of the Rajputs in the imperial hierarchy to the level prevalent during Akbar's reign. (Chandra 1993:83).

Chandra gives the reason for Aurangzeb's reintroduction of the religious poll tax (*jizyah*) on non-Muslims as a response to Muslim demands that they had lost imperial positions to Hindus. Jizyah was put into effect from the twenty-first year of Aurangzeb's reign. Aurangzeb was forced to seek this compromise solution as nearly thirty per cent of his mansab holders were now Hindus. The slightly more than two-thirds Muslim majority of the Mughal hierarchy was internally divided on ethnic and sectarian lines. So Aurangzeb could manipulate the different imperial segments to keep each other in check.

Aurangzeb kept a tight control on his leading mansabdars, even their marriages required his approval. Satish Chandra cites the case of the Mewar's Rana Raj Singh who was rebuked by Aurangzeb for entering into marriage without the emperor's permission. Aurangzeb probably feared that as marriages were often linked to

political alliances, all non-morganatic marriages would thus have to meet imperial approval. Satish Chandra attaches marriage alliances with considerable political importance. When Aurangzeb married a Rajput princess, she was from Muslim Rajput family (Griffen 1940) but he did arrange the marriages of several of his sons to Hindu Rajput brides. This alone shows that Aurangzeb did realise the continuing importance of Mughal-Rajput marriages. (Tal 1994:219-20).

Irfan Habib's *'The Agrarian System of Mughal India'* uses the socio-economic divisions in rural society as the basis for his study. The principal agrarian social groupings being non-cultivating landlords, landowning self-cultivators (free peasants), tenant peasants and landless peasants who sell their manual labour on an ad hoc basis. These class divisions generally but not always corresponded to certain caste divisions. For much of northern India, the Rajputs falling usually into the first category, the Jats in both the first, second and third. The emphasis on zamindars seems to suggest that the kingly function at the central, regional and local levels had the most important role in the empire. The Religious function was of secondary importance, hence socio-economic relations are the focus of modern historians. (Raheja 1988:497-522).

As the agrarian economy far exceeds the non-agrarian sector in size, the former is the focus of attention. Groups in the second agrarian category like certain Jat clans were predominant in regional rebellions. The Jats had a social structure that provided strong internal cohesion. Sometimes under Jat patronage, more deprived social classes joined in the locally based peasant revolts. (Rana 1981:287-326). The agrarian population experienced a gradual twofold increase in the revenue collection rate from a quarter to half of produce in the century long period from Sher Shah's to Shah Jahan's reign.

Shah Jahan lavished millions of rupees on his architectural designs and fought costly wars trying to occupy Uzbek and Safawid territory. The vast majority of Shah Jahan's subjects not only did not benefit but suffered due to his ill-conceived policies. Aurangzeb inherited a bankrupt empire and therefore turned towards the Deccan in order to acquire much needed wealth. The decision to forcefully absorb the Deccan into

the Mughal empire, was taken as there was a lack of much needed land grants (*Jagirs*) for the new generation of mansabdars. This military exercise instead proved fatal to the Mughal empire as the costs in personnel and financial resources far exceeded any material gain.

The main fault of the jagirdari system according to Habib (1963:269-271), was the rising level of land revenue demand extracted from often reluctant peasants. As jagirs were temporary land assignments, the holders of jagirs exploited peasants much more than did the zamindars. So Habib says that zamindar led peasant revolts caused the Mughal empire to eventually collapse.

In his work '*The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*' Athar Ali has split Aurangzeb's reign into various parts on the basis of major events. This step shows that Aurangzeb went through different phases during his nearly half century rule. Jizyah was put into effect from the twenty-first year (1679) of Aurangzeb's reign. According to Athar Ali, Aurangzeb seems to be quite accommodating towards Hindu mansabdars. When the tables at the appendix of Athar Ali's book are consulted, this notion bears fruit. Parts of two tables from Athar Ali's book are in the appendix of this dissertation.

In the table (Ali 1966:175-176) for the top fifteen mansabdars of the pre-jizyah period of Aurangzeb's reign (1658-1678), the Hindu Rajput general Mizra Rajah Jai Singh is the highest ranking mansabdar of the Mughal empire. Aurangzeb's own maternal uncle Shaista Khan is the ranked third while his principal wife's father Shah Nawaz Khan Safvi (an exiled member of the Shia Safawid dynasty of Iran) is only ranked eighth. The other Hindu mansabdar in the top five, is Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathor of Marwar. However two other Hindu mansabdars are included in the top dozen, Rana Raj Singh of Mewar (11th) and the Maratha Shivaji's grandson Shambhaji (12 th).

Aurangzeb's tally of high ranking Hindu mansabdars exceeds that of Akbar's. Only one Hindu Rajput, the famous Rajah Man Singh holds a rank of 7000 zat in Akbar's administration.(Sharma 1962:78-9). This appears to be more amazing once it is realised that Akbar is usually considered by historians as the most liberal Muslim

ruler. The other interesting statistics regarding this particular table is that Iranis exceed the Turanis (Aurangzeb's own racial grouping) by a ratio of four to one. There is only one native born ethnic Indian Muslim mansabdar and not a single Pathan mansabdar at this elite level. The Pathans even being predominantly Sunnis like the Turanis, probably suffered due to the Mughal lack of faith in Pathan loyalty due to Jahan Khan Lodi's rebellion during the early part of Shah Jahan's reign.

The table (Ali 1966:121-122) for the Aurangzeb's officially highest ranking supporters (4000 zat and above) during the war of succession also presents us with many interesting details. The top eight of the select eighteen which includes four of first eight highest mansabdars of 5000 zat rank and above are Iranis. As most of these Iranis were Shias, then the claims that Aurangzeb was anti-Shia should not be given much importance. Turanis again are under represented with only three mansabdars of this group of eighteen but the premier mansabdar heading the list is a Turani. Even then this Turani is alone among the super elite sub-group of mansabdars of rank 5000 zat and above.

Four Hindus are represented in the table of eighteen pro-Aurangzeb mansabdars, the Rajputs and the Marathas with two representatives each. Both of these two Rajput mansabdars belong in the eight member super elite category (5000 zat rank and beyond). One of these Rajput mansabdars, Rana Raj Singh of Mewar (5000 zat) will soon be promoted to 6000 zat rank as shown in the earlier described table. Champat Bundela's (ranked 8th) clan was not treated well by Shah Jahan, so decided to fight against Shah Jahan's nominee Dara. Only one Pathan (10th) and one Indian Muslim (a Maratha convert) are shown on this list. It is difficult to determine the ethnic group of Sarfraz Khan Deccani (ranked 7th). These listings do not take any account of persons such as Mirza Rajah Jai Singh in the imperial army under Dara, who were secret sympathizers of Aurangzeb.(Ali 1966:22).

Athar Ali (1969) in his separate study on provincial governors under Aurangzeb, highlights that Iranis were over represented at this level. Rajputs and Pathans due to their strong local roots were seldom appointed to such administrative posts. Yet under Aurangzeb, three Rajputs did reach this level. Previously, in Shah Jahan's

reign, no Rajput was a provincial governor.

Another of Athar Ali's excellently produced works is '*Towards an Interpretation of the Mughal Empire*' where there is an useful table of medium to high ranking mansabdars for different dates corresponding for each Mughal emperor from Akbar to Aurangzeb. In Aurangzeb's case his reign has been partitioned into a pre-Jizyah period (1658-1678) and Jizyah period (1679-1707). (Ali 1995:273).

In order to extract more information from Athar Ali's original table, the data has been processed using a spreadsheet package. A more detailed and accurate table is shown in the appendix which has been constructed for the purposes of further comparative analysis. Chandra's claim that jizya was introduced as to appease Khanazadi Muslim families is tested there and appears to hold. [See Appendix page 36].

These three distinguished Aligarh School historians were the first to study Mughal history without using nationalist or orientalist ideology. For the Aligarh historians, the failure of the Mughal empire was not the religious policies of Aurangzeb but the increased competition between Mughal mansabdars and the exploitation of peasants. Satish Chandra being a Hindu helps to make this approach more creditable, otherwise the Aligarh School would be treated as group of Muslim apologists.

3c. The impact of the previous two approaches on non-specialist historians.

A great deal of literature exists on Aurangzeb, in various forms like extracts in general histories of the World, South Asia, Islam or in publications on Medieval India. It would be an impossible task to list and review each and every piece of work related to the subject of Aurangzeb. Here in this section of this dissertation, a general selection has been chosen that attempts to cover every part of the spectrum.

'A History of India (Bharat)' by Dr. Shri Harsha Sharma (1985) contains a chronological overview of India's history. Some of it is obviously devoted to the Aurangzeb's long reign. According to Dr. Harsha Sharma, the Mughals are worthy descendants of the Mongol Chingiz Khan, especially as Aurangzeb excels at inflicting cruelty. Although highly critical of Aurangzeb, Will Durant (1954:474-475) describes him as '*the least cruel of the Moguls, and the mildest; slaughter abated in his reign*'. This shows the intensity of Dr. H Sharma's hatred towards Aurangzeb.

Dr. Harsha Sharma blames Aurangzeb for the Sikhs and Hindus, having to endure a well planned campaign aimed at their mass conversion to Islam. Dr. Harsha Sharma believes that as a result of Aurangzeb's blatant hatred towards non-Muslims, the relationship between the various religious communities deteriorated and will continue along this direction.

Dr. Harsha Sharma (1985:42) then turns his attention to the 17th century warlord Maratha Shivaji who was partially successful against the Mughals. Dr. Harsha Sharma considers that because of his military exploits, Shivaji was really a reincarnation of the Hindu god Shiva. Thus, Shivaji should be hailed as the saviour of the Hindus. Such a view was first published in the 1930s by the Marathi Brahmin, Ekanath Annji Joshi, in order to further the cause of Hindu extremism. (O'Hanlon 1985:166).

Dr. H Sharma is entitled to believe that Shivaji was really the god Shiva as criticism of religious beliefs does not form a part of a historian's task. Criticism of his treatment of history is valid, as is his desire to combine history with religion, which is detrimental to the subject itself. Not only is Dr. H Sharma providing a very distorted

picture of Aurangzeb but is simultaneously undermining Shivaji's greatness.

Dr. H Sharma conveniently makes many aspects of Indian history inaccessible to his readership. Both Aurangzeb and Shivaji are seen by Dr. Harsha Sharma as the opposing representatives engaged in a long-running inter-religious conflict where socio-economic factors are entirely non-existent. Sadly, Dr. H Sharma is not the only such biased writer of general Indian history. The danger lies in that most of Sharma's readers will encounter his work as a primer and it will subsequently shape their minds to view Indian history as just a series of Hindu-Muslim confrontations.

Dr. H Sharma has taken the decision to avoid mentioning the gallant roles of Muslims and Hindus who were both recruited in the two opposing armies. This decision on the part of Dr. H Sharma has not been taken due to his insufficient knowledge. As Dr. Harsha Sharma belongs to the extremist wing of the reformist Hindu sect, the Arya Samaj, he feels the strong need to construct history on Hindu revivalist terms.

Kh. Jamil Ahmad in his publication '*Hundred Great Muslims*' (1984:406-411), does however acknowledge that Hindu Rajputs did constitute an important part of Aurangzeb's army. Nevertheless, Jamil Ahmad portrays these Hindu Rajputs as being a treacherous people who were eager at the earliest opportunity to betray the Mughals. He clearly shows here that he has not read the output of the Aligarh School. For instance, Aurangzeb eventually choose Mirza Rajah Jai Singh to pursue Shivaji, as Aurangzeb's Muslim generals including his own maternal uncle Shaista Khan, proved to be ineffective. Athar Ali (1966) decries most of Aurangzeb's Muslim generals, as they preferred to accept bribes from the enemy, rather than actually fight. In contrast, Rajputs were less inclined to betray their master due to their stricter codes of chivalry. Some Rajputs fought with suicidal bravery for Aurangzeb. (Singh 1974:95).

Jamil Ahmed attributes Aurangzeb's problems to the relative liberalism of the previous Mughal Emperors especially Akbar. The surprise is that Jamil Ahmad was educated at the Department for Mughal studies, University of Allahabad, where the

theory of composite Indian culture was devised by L.F. Rushbrook Williams, Ishwari Prasad and Dr. R. P. Tripathi. Since, Jamil Ahmad had migrated to Pakistan, so perhaps to blend in with the culture of historical debate favoured in his new homeland, such an approach was required. In some ways, Jamil Ahmad's version of history is more damaging than that of Dr. H Sharma, as his equally prejudiced outlook is better concealed in a more elaborate use of language.

Ansar Hussain Khan's offering is '*The Rediscovery of India: A New Subcontinent*'. Ansar Hussain devotes a considerable portion of his book to Aurangzeb's interactions with the Hindus. Ansar Hussain heaps piles of abuse on Aurangzeb by labelling him as being religiously intolerant and power hungry. Ansar Hussain says he finds it difficult to determine if Aurangzeb was genuinely religious or just used Islam as vehicle to implement political ambitions.

Ansar Hussain further adds that due to Aurangzeb's misrule, the Hindus and Muslims will continue to mistrust each other. Historians of socio-economic persuasions, including those of the Aligarh School, are attacked for wasting their effort in trying to defend Aurangzeb. Ansar Hussain's work is however not entirely negative. He mentions that Aurangzeb had provided a land grant for a Sikh shrine at Dehra Dun. Despite pressure from the ulama, Aurangzeb had raised Shivaji's grandson Shahu as a strict Hindu. This becomes more significant, when Grewal (1990 :145) comments that the British, arguably the most secularist rulers in India's history, had the Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh's son Dalip converted to Christianity.

Ansar Hussain does however apply a more socio-economic perspective when he deals with Mughal-Sikh relations. The Sikh Guru Govind Singh had an estimated military strength of a hundred thousand men. It embarked on warfare against the landed elites and in particular the Hindu Rajputs of Himachal Pradesh. Initially Aurangzeb preferred to be left out of this regional conflict. As some of the Himachal Rajput Rajahs were also holders of mansab ranks, Aurangzeb could not ignore their request for intervention. The mansabdari system made both patron and client oblige each other's needs. The mechanics of the mansabdari system have to be given their due

importance, if we are really to understand Mughal history.

In addition, Ansar Hussain does say that Aurangzeb eventually made peace with Guru Govind Singh. He mentions the inclusion of Pathans in the Guru's army and Himachal Rajputs in Aurangzeb's army. This creates an impression that his work is designed to 'accept' Hindu communalist attitudes so to develop them into a safer form. Ansar Hussain's very unusual work could be a first step in the battle against Hindu communalism, as he cleverly refrains from directly opposing it.

Among non-specialist historians, the influence of Jadunath Sarkar still outweighs that of the Aligarh School. The output of the Aligarh School are seldom listed in the bibliographies of general history books. The readership of the Aligarh School remains confined to a small elite, sadly there does not seem to be a trickle-down effect. The complicated language used by the Aligarh School, together with the prevailing political climate of South Asia, prevents further expansion of its readership.

4. Aurangzeb's religious policies.

4a. Islamization.

Mughal tradition drew from various sources including Central Asian Shamanistic, Sasanian-Iranian, Indian and Islamic cultures. This infusion resulted in elaborate court rituals and lavish festivals, Aurangzeb reduced or abandoned many such ceremonies like the celebration of the Iranian new year. This imperial shift would be considered, in one sense, as a move towards increased secularization. Nevertheless, many authors [Agrawal (1983), Bilimoria (1908). . .] attribute Aurangzeb's reforming stance as they have described him as a narrow-minded Sunni Muslim.

This view of Aurangzeb is so constructed, as such authors attempt to portray him as a precursor to modern Islamists. In contrast, Aurangzeb was influenced by the asceticism of Sufism. This religious inclination combined with the dwindling financial resources of the empire, probably led to the lack of imperial patronage of lavish ceremonies, art and poetry.

Aurangzeb pursued his interest in Sufism by reading Imam Ghazali's '*Ahya-ul-ulum*'. (Faruki 1935:543). Aurangzeb patronized philosophers like Danishmand Khan, despite his frequent use of Sanskrit translations. (Rizvi 1987:235). Aurangzeb also patronized the Firangi Mal ulama who were strongly inclined towards Greek philosophy and Sufism. All these measures were taken, as mainstream Islam in the medieval period included philosophy, Sufism and Shariah.

The highly acclaimed Hanafi legal text (*Fatawai Alamgiri*) was compiled under Aurangzeb's orders, so that Shariah derived rulings were not abused. Despite this enforcement of religious laws, Aurangzeb usually refrained from using punishment. (Durant 1954:475). Increased custom duties on Hindu merchants was imposed, probably to encourage the expansion of the fledgling Muslim business communities, rather than a simple measure of religious bias.

However, Hindu mansabdars were more discriminated by Muslim mansabdars than by Aurangzeb. Raja Raghanath Khatri, the imperial finance minister (*diwan*), acted as

Aurangzeb's first wazir, until his death in 1663. Aurangzeb could not bestow the title of wazir on this Hindu Punjabi Khatri, as the Muslim mansabdars would be offended. (Agrawal 1978:xiii;45). This shows that Aurangzeb was hemmed in, by the religious outlook of his fellow Muslims, so Islamization was used to appease them. In addition, the celebrated Irani Shia general Mir Jumla, had his dwelling ritually washed, after Hindu Rajput mansabdars visited him during their imperial duties. (Umar 1993:170). This also shows that Shias were less tolerant, than Sunnis like Aurangzeb, towards Hindus. On the basis of the historical data provided, it is difficult to believe that Aurangzeb was responsible for religious fanaticism.

4b. Temple destruction.

Although primarily an architectural historian, Catherine B. Asher is extremely well versed in Mughal history. She is among the few historians to tackle without prejudice the highly controversial topic of temple demolishing during Aurangzeb's reign. Asher (1992:253-259) argues that Aurangzeb only tore down Hindu temples, when there occurred large scale anti-state activities. Temples may have been considered by Aurangzeb as probable places where revolts could have been planned.

The prime example mentioned by her is the Keshava Deva temple in Mathura, which was demolished as a punishment for the Mathura Jat rebellion. In the course of this rebellion, several thousand Mughal troops and the imperial faujdar were killed. Aurangzeb's great-grandfather Akbar's tomb was destroyed and his remains burnt by the rebellious Jats.

Aurangzeb's name is often associated by most historians with the destruction of a great number of temples. The compiler of colonial censuses, William Crooke (1972:112-113) believes that some temples were leveled but many myths were created to enhance the sacredness of some temples. Aurangzeb is said to have failed to have them knocked down, as his troops were defeated by the supernatural powers of the Hindu deities. Mary Searle-Chatterjee (1994:150) even goes so far as to mention that many Hindu temples have been ravaged or razed to the ground by rival Hindu kings, she says that even Shivaji committed such acts of sacrilege. This could be why the issue of temple destruction in medieval India was not so bitterly contested as it was recently.

Usually considered as a staunch anti-Aurangzeb historian, Sri Ram Sharma (1962) says that in contrary to popular perception, Hindus were allowed to build temples in Aurangzeb's empire especially where rebellions did not take place. He even cites a few cases where Aurangzeb had made grants to a existing temples.

4c. The imposition of Jizyah.

Aurangzeb's decision in April 1679, to impose the hated poll tax on the empire's non-Muslim subjects, (*Jizyah*), is usually seen by historians as just one of a series of anti-Hindu measures. It is also regarded as a regressive step which brought the Akbari traditions of the Mughal empire to an end. The reimposition of Jizyah some hundred years after its abolition by Akbar seemed to suggest that Aurangzeb's empire was mirroring the Delhi Sultanate period.

Jizyah increased the social distinction between Hindus and Muslims. Hindus felt discriminated by the Mughal empire and some violently protested against the state authorities. Saiyid Abbas Ali Rizvi (1987:183) thinks that Aurangzeb might have believed that Hindu affluence was the reason responsible for locally based rebellions. So jizyah could be considered as an appropriate measure against the outbreak of revolts by curbing Hindu financial resources. This could have been true in some cases but most revolts were sparked off as the sections of the population involved were already overtaxed.

Sri Ram Sharma (1962) dismisses claims by other historians that jizyah was imposed in order bring more Hindus into the fold of Islam. This is interesting in the case of hardest-hit group of poor to middle class Hindus, as the jizya demand accounted for a little over three weeks worth of their annual income. (Habib 1963:245). Yet only a few such Hindus converted to Islam to escape jizyah, perhaps the harsh method of collection employed by the state, rather than the size of the amount itself brought about this minor change.

The most destitute section of Hindu society, Brahmin priests, Hindu employed by the state administration and Hindu soldiers serving in the Mughal army were all exempted from the payment of jizya. During famines, the collection of jizyah was suspended but still the jizyah policy only benefited the ulama and minor ranking Muslim mansabdars as a source of additional income. Zahiruddin Faruki (1935) mentions that Aurangzeb had abolished several secular taxes but this explanation still does justify jizyah.

Probably the only creditable explanation is that pointed out by Satish Chandra (1993) who asserts that it was a response to the older Muslim (*Khanazadi*) nobility's demand that they had lost jagirs during this period to the newly appointed Maratha mansabdars. If this was not the case, then jizyah would have imposed from the initial year of Aurangzeb's reign rather than the twenty-first year. [See appendix p.36 for details].

4d. The Rajput Rebellion

Robert C. Hallissey like Athar Ali, is one of the few authors to write on specific issues relating to Aurangzeb's reign. While Athar Ali concentrates on the entire imperial hierarchy, Hallissey devotes his research skills on a portion of it that rebel. Hallissey's much neglected work is '*The Rajput Rebellion Against Aurangzeb*' (1977).

Hallissey sets out to study all the different entities involved in the Rajput rebellion separately and then attempts to link each one to another. The advantage of Hallissey's scheme is that he can see why this particular conflict happened. Hallissey first studies Rajput identity and society. This where many historians are lacking as they treat the Rajput rebellion on the same terms as the Sikh, Maratha and Jat rebellions. The most distinguishing feature of the Rajput rebellion is that it is the rebellion of an ex-imperial elite group. Thus, Sarkar (1974) blames Aurangzeb for alienating the Rajputs, who were one of the empire's pillars.

The commonly used title for this rebellion is grossly misleading as it appears that all the Rajputs rebelled against Aurangzeb. From Hallissey's detailed study, it appears that only a fraction of Rajputs actually rebelled. The Rajput rebellion primarily concerned the Rathor clan of the Marwar kingdom centred at the city of Jodhpur. Intra-Rathor warfare in the fifteenth century had resulted in the creation of a separate Rathor kingdom, Bikaner. Throughout the Marwar Rathor Rajput rebellion, Bikaner supplied troops to the Mughal cause. Bikaner's major concern during the medieval period was that it would be forcefully re-absorbed by Marwar. Any external power that would threaten Marwar was welcomed. For Bikaner, the Aurangzeb-Marwar conflict fulfilled this role perfectly.

The Marwar rebellion has only recently been seen by historians as essentially a succession dispute that got rather complicated due to Aurangzeb's stubborn urge to get involved. Previously, views of historians like Chaudhuri (1974:238-239) who believed Aurangzeb was only involved, as he wanted the heir to the Marwar throne to convert to Islam, prevailed. The rebellion had wider implications as Aurangzeb's third son Prince Akbar and the Rana of Mewar, joined the Marwar rebels. Imperial troops had to be diverted away from other troublesome areas of the empire, so that the

tense situation in Marwar could be controlled. The research of Hallissey shows complex issues associated with this rebellion.

The death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathor while serving imperial interests at Jamrud in what is now Afghanistan, had sparked off the whole episode. Jaswant Singh was the empire's fifth highest ranking noble (Ali 1966:175), a twice former governor of the rich province of Gujarat and a close maternal relative of Shah Jahan. Norman Ziegler (1994:201) says because of increased socio-economic contacts with the Mughals, the Rathor Rajahs introduced internal reforms in Marwar, on lines similar to the mansabdari system. Jaswant Singh unintentionally had by taking such a step alienated some of his own clansmen. Jaswant Singh already^{had} an enemy in the form of the legitimate but disinherited heir to the Marwar throne, Indra Singh. Aurangzeb easily exploited these intra-Rathor rivalries and the rebellious section of Rathors failed partly due to prince Akbar's incompetence to mount a successful challenge to Aurangzeb.

Hallissey credits Aurangzeb for using an appropriate mix of force and inducements that not only split the anti-imperial Marwar-Mewar alliance but readmitted most of the rebel Rajputs to the imperial fold. Even Durga Das Rathor who spearheaded the Marwar rebellion eventually accepted the post of military commander (*faujdar*) for Patan in Gujarat. Had Aurangzeb really been a religious zealot, the outcome of this rather messy episode of Mughal-Rajput history would not have turned out as so. Aurangzeb wanted Indra Singh in power at Marwar as he proved to be a more committed mansabdar than Jaswant Singh during imperial campaigns in the Deccan. Aurangzeb could have avoided much of the worst part of the conflict by recognising Jaswant's infant son Ajit Singh as Maharajah of Marwar.

CONCLUSION

The Mughal Emperors delegated much of their power to their immediate subordinates. Their decision to govern using this method was not made by choice but because of the sheer size of the Mughal empire. Aurangzeb in particular displaced local zamindars with those from elsewhere, so that a 'foreign' gentry would be more loyal to central authority. Chatterjee(1967:199,256). However, Muzaffar Alam (1989) thinks policy caused more rebellions especially as Aurangzeb was absent from northern India for the later half of his reign.

The Mughal empire attained its maximum size under Aurangzeb's aggressive southern expansion policy. Once the Mughal empire reached its furthest possible limits, the only course left open to it, was to decline. So why should this be the case, the rest of this dissertation has so far shown that Aurangzeb's religious inclinations are not on their own, responsible for the demise of the empire.

Rather it was the inability of the Mughal mansabdari system to fully integrate local elites into its structure. Satish Chandra (1993:150-151) explains Aurangzeb's failure in terms of the Emperor's misunderstanding of the entire Maratha episode. The Maratha artillery became superior to that of the Mughals (Robinson 1982), as it would develop in Shivaji's kingdom free from the Mughal restrictions that were applied elsewhere in India.

Stanley Wolpert (1993:167) supplies a figure of a hundred thousand imperial troops being lost every year during the final phase of the Mughal-Maratha conflict. Considering that the huge Mughal army's strength was 500,000 foot-soldiers plus 100,000 cavalry, this represented a massive loss of life. (Wolpert 1982:37)

It now seems obvious why many senior Mughal mansabdars did try to directly settle matters with the Marathas. What is even more strange, is that none of these anti-war Mughal mansabdars actually forced Aurangzeb to reverse his doomed course of action. Very few of the leading mansabdars joined Prince Akbar's rebellion. Aurangzeb's overpowering personality kept many dissenters in control. Once Aurangzeb's mind was focused on an objective, nothing but fate could make him

change course. During the Marwar rebellion, the Rathor queen Rani Hadi offered Aurangzeb the opportunity to demolish Jodhpur's Hindu temples. Rani Hadi was desperate that her son Ajit Singh should succeed to the Marwar throne but Aurangzeb did not take up her offer. (Rizvi 1987:137).

Aurangzeb applied Rajput inheritance laws stricter than the Rajputs themselves. Such laws favoured Indra Singh's claim but he was unpopular among his own people and proved to be a liability for Aurangzeb. This shows that Hallissey (1977) is justified, when he says Aurangzeb's real fault was not his religious inflexibility but his personal inflexibility.

So what were Aurangzeb's actual religious inclinations? Jonathan Parry (1994:39) cites Aurangzeb making proclamations that Muslims should not interfere with Hindus practicing their own religion. Yet, Aurangzeb under certain circumstances did demolish temples. Nevertheless, Aurangzeb at the apex of a pyramidically structured society, still commanded loyalty and respect from most Hindus.

Shivaji's grandson, the former captive, Shahu Shambhaji paid his customary respects at Aurangzeb's grave. The Mughal state asserted a source of legitimacy for the second tier of India's rulers. (Bayly 1988:15). This patron-client relationship between the Mughal Emperor and regional elites was the one most important aspect of Mughal administration. Without such a link, the resulting non-collection of land revenue would result in the empire's literal collapse. The regional elites could use the Mughal mansabdari structure, to enlarge their sphere of influence. So in addition to inherited land (*watan-jagirs*), several Rajahs were assigned land grants in other often richer provinces of the empire. (Crewe 1985:34).

As long as this two-way system benefited both patron and client, everything went smoothly for the empire. Once this system showed signs of breaking down, partial Islamization was used perhaps as a remedy and as a diversion from the socio-economic focus. This partial Islamization was also a response to a more assertive Hinduism. As many mid-ranking farming groups aspired upward social mobility and so caste reform movements arose. These social mobilization movements

often took on a religious complexion.

The Jats of eastern Punjab are the prime case, they went one step further and completely broke off from Hinduism. Sikhism was the vehicle for social protest against the hegemony of both Hindu and Muslim privileged groups. (Singh 1991). Yet, most historians still portray the Sikh-Mughal hostilities as being solely of religious origin.

Non-communalist historians emphasis that the empire's stability was Aurangzeb's major concern. They realise that most of Aurangzeb's religious concerns were confined to his private life. Aurangzeb could not change the structure of the empire or that of Indian society. Aurangzeb had to work within the defined boundaries of the jagirdari system. When the system itself had inherent flaws, Aurangzeb can't be blamed for its failure. I feel a more pragmatic emperor like Sher Shah Sur in Aurangzeb's place, might have prolonged such a system for a little longer but its eventual collapse could not have been avoided.

APPENDIX 35

		Tatani	Iranis	Afghans	Indian Muslims	Other Muslims	Rajputs	Marathas	Other Hindus	Total	
(i)	1595	33	23	2	14	4	21	0	1	98	AKBAR
(ii)	1620	22	33	8	11	4	21	1	0	100	JAHANGIR
(iii)	1656	22	33	5	10	3	21	5	1	100	SHAH JAHAN
(iv)	1658-1678	37	67	15	26	14	27	14	2	202	PRE-JIZYAH AURANGZEB PERIOD
		18.5%	33.5%	7.5%	13%	7%	13.5%	7%	1%		
(v)	1679-1707	42	65	18	35	34	28	47	8	277	JIZYAH PERIOD OF AURANGZEB
		15.5%	24%	6.6%	12.5%	12%	10%	17%	3%		

This is the original table from Athar Ali's book (1995:273) of mansabdars, with just the addition of the names of the emperors corresponding to the dates inserted.

Ethnic&Religious share of Mansabs under Aurangzeb.Computed from Ali (1995:273).

Mansabs = or >	Turanis	Iranis	Afghans	Indian Muslims	Other Muslims	Rajputs	Marath.
Pre-Jizya (a)	37	67	15	26	14	27	14
Under Jizya(b)	42	65	18	35	34	28	47
Difference	5	-2	3	9	20	1	33
Share of (a)	18.32%	33.17%	7.43%	12.87%	6.93%	13.37%	6.93%
Share of (b)	15.16%	23.47%	6.50%	12.64%	12.27%	10.11%	16.97%
change in share	-3.15%	-9.70%	-0.93%	-0.24%	5.34%	-3.26%	10.04%

Ethnic&Religious share of Mansabs under Aurangzeb.Computed from Ali (1995:273).

Other Hindus	TOTAL	Muslims	Hindus	Muslim Share	Hindu Share	Muslim Loss	Hindu Gain
2	202	159	43	78.71%	21.29%		
8	277	194	83	70.04%	29.96%	-8.68%	8.68%
6	75	35	40				
0.99%							
2.89%							
1.90%							

Satish Chandra claim is validated on the basis of the data provided. Hindu Maratha mansabdars increased their share. (overall Hindu gain=8.68%=Muslim loss.). Jizyah might have softened hardline Muslim/ Khanazadi attitudes towards the appointment of Hindus.

Other H.C.

APPENDIX

LIST OF MAMSADARS OF AJRANGZEH HOLDING THE RANKS OF 1,000 ZAT AND ABOVE.

A. Mamadars who held or reached the rank of 1,000 ZAT AND ABOVE DURING THE PERIOD, 1653-1678.

S.No. Name and Title		Mamadars of 5,000 and above					
		Rank highest during the period	Country of birth	Group	Sub-groups Rajput, Maratha, Afghan, Zamindar, etc.	Father or other blood relation in service	Authorities
1.	Umdar-ul-Mulk, Mirza Raja Jai Singh Kachwaha	7,000/7,000 (2-3h)	India	Indian	Rajput-Zamindar	Father	AL. 907; S.D.A. 52; M.U., III 568-77
2.	Mirza Shuja, Najabat Khan, Khan-i-Khanan	7,000/7,000 (2-3h)	India	Turani		Father	AL. 117; M.U., III 621-28
3.	Mirza Abu Talib, Shaista Khan, Amir-ul-Umara.	7,000/7,000 (2-3h)	India	Iraqi		Father	AL. 130; M.U., II 690-707
4.	Mir Malik Husain, Khan-i-Jahan Bahadur, Zafar Jang Kokaltash	7,000/7,000 (6,000 x 2-3h)	India	Irani		Father	M.L. 142; A. M. T. 121a; M.U., I 791-813
5.	Maharaja Jaswant Singh Rathor	7,000/7,000 (5,000 x 2-3h)	India	Indian	Rajput-Zamindar	Father	AL. 331-32; M.U., III 599-602

S.N. Name and Title	Rank highest during the period	Country of birth	Group	Sub-groups Religion, Political, Ligion, Zamindar, etc.	Father or other blood relation in service	References
6. Mir Muhammad Sa'ad, Mir Jume, Moazzam Khan, Kharid-Kharan, Sipahsalar	7,000/7,000 (5,000 x 2-35)	Iran	Irani	Deccani	Father	Al. 563; M. U, III 500-55
7. Khadilullah Khan	5,000/6,000 (2-35)	Iran	Irani	—	Brother	Al. 119; M.U, I 775-82
8. Shah Nawaz Khan Safvi	6,000/6,000 (3,000 x 2-35)	Iran	Irani	—	Father	Al. 209-10; M.U, II 670-1
9. Under-ul-Mulk, Jafar Khan	5,000/5,000 (4,000 x 2-35)	India	Irani	—	Father	Al. 162; M.U, I 531-35
10. Mirza Tahmasp, Mahabat Khan	6,000/5,000 (3,000 x 2-35)	India	Irani	—	Father	Al. 754; M.U, III 590-95
11. Fara Raj Singh	6,000/5,000 (1,000 x 2-35)	India	Indian	Rajput-Zamindar	Father	Al. 194; M.U, II 206-08
12. Shamshaji	6,000/6,000	India	Indian	Maratha	—	M.A. 142; Jamindar Table C. 75a
13. Muhammad Amin Khan	6,000/5,000 (1,000 x 2-55)	India	Irani	Deccani	Father	Al. 612, 835; M.A. 121; M.U, III 613-20
14. Malik Ahmed Naiba	6,000/5,000	India	Indian	Deccani	—	Al. 913-20; T.M. 1076 A.H.; M.U, III 562-65
15. Tamsin Daul, Akbar Khan Rumi	6,000/6,000	Turkey	Turani	—	—	M.A. 37-48; T.U. 9A

SUPPORTERS OF ADRANCE IN THE WAR OF SUCCESSION

1358-59.

Members of 5,000 and above

S. No.	Name and Title	Rank	Racial Group	Source
1.	Mirza Shuja Najabat Khan Khan-i-Khasan	7,000/7,000	Turani	<i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 42, 54, 61, 28, 117; <i>Dihlwan</i> , 158; <i>M. U.</i> , III, 821-28; <i>Hasim Khan</i> , 12b, 16a.
2.	Mir Muhammad Saeed Mir Juma Munzarn Khan.	6,000/6,000 (2-55)	Irani	<i>Dihlwan</i> , 18a; <i>Tufay-i-Shah Jahani</i> , 30b; <i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 37; <i>Namuri</i> , 108b; <i>M. U.</i> , III, 550-55; <i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 84, 130, 267; <i>Hasim Khan</i> , 25b; <i>Mannucci</i> , I, 262.
3.	Raja Raj Singh	5,000/5,000	Rajput	<i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 123, 194; <i>Vir Vinod</i> , II, 419-20, 421-27; <i>M. U.</i> , II, 206-208, <i>Amal-i-Sulh</i> , III, 451.
4.	Abdullah Sultana Khan	6,000/6,000 (2-55)	Irani	<i>Dihlwan</i> , 12a, 18a; <i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 111, 114, 136, 321; <i>M. U.</i> , II, 690-707; <i>Hasim Khan</i> , 26b; <i>Mannucci</i> , I, 255.
5.	Shah Mir Khawafi	5,000/5,000	Irani	<i>Tar Das</i> , 20b; <i>Namuri</i> , 97a, 98b; <i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 41; <i>Amal-i-Sulh</i> , III, 382; <i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 68, 92, 98, 156-57; <i>Tufay-i-Shah Jahani</i> , 30a; <i>Hasim Khan</i> , 28b; <i>M. U.</i> , II, 668-70.
6.	Muhammad Tahir Mashhadi Wazir Khan	5,000/5,000	Irani	<i>Dihlwan</i> , 14b; <i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 50; <i>Namuri</i> , 85b; <i>Hasim Khan</i> , 15a; <i>M. U.</i> , III, 386-40.
7.	Sarfaz Khan Doccari	5,000/4,000	Other Muslim	<i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 47; <i>M. U.</i> , II, 463-78.
8.	Champur Bundela	5,000/	Rajput	<i>Dihlwan</i> , 15b; <i>Alamgir Nama</i> , 76, 92, 153, 207, 217; <i>Hasim Khan</i> , 20b, 23a; <i>Namuri</i> , I, 742-75.

S. No. Name and Title

Rank

Racial Group

Source

Supporters of 4Kt

- | S. No. | Name and Title | Rank | Racial Group | Source |
|--------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|---|
| 9. | Kutubish Khan
(Maswant Rao) | 4,000/4,000
(1,000 x 2.50) | Ocher Muslim | Hatim Khan, 20a, 24a, 28a; Alangir Nama, 55, 63, 92; M. U., III, 153. |
| 10. | Chazi Bijapur Tardola Khan | 4,000/4,000 | Afghan | Alangir Nama, 76, 93; Hatim Khan, 13a, 24a, 28a; M. U., III, 309. |
| 11. | Jadu Rao | 4,000/2,500 | Marathi | Alangir Nama, 47, 53; Hatim Khan, 14a, 20a. |
| 12. | Muhammed Beg Zulfagar Khan | 4,000/2,000 | Irani | Mamuri, 97a; Alangir Nama, 51, 62, 76, 92, 100; M. U., II, 89-93; Hatim Khan, 21b; Agil Khan, 39, 59. |
| 13. | Mir Ziauddin Husain
Khan Khan Khan | 4,000/2,000 | Turani | Mamuri, 97b; Tufai-Shah Jalani, 30b; Alangir Nama, 43, 76, 92, 157; M. U., I, 217-20; Hatim Khan, 124a, 23a; Agil Khan, 39. |
| 14. | Mulafat Khan Azam Khan | 4,000/2,500 | Irani | Dilawar, 14b; Arang Nama, 26; Alangir Nama, 51, 92; Mamuri, 98b; M. U., III, 500-503; Hatim Khan, 28a. |
| 15. | Mirza Muhammad Nashedi
Asalat Khan | 4,000/2,000 | Irani | Alangir Nama, 51, 53, 63; Mamuri, 95b; M. U., 222-23; Hatim Khan, 15b, 20b, 28b. |
| 16. | Mirza Sultan Safi | 4,000/2,000 | Irani | Alangir Nama, 46, 218; M. U., III, 581-83. |
| 17. | Damaji Deccani | 4,000/1,300 | Maratha | Hatim Khan, 14a; Alangir Nama, 47, 63. |
| 18. | Khawaja Abid Khan | 4,000/700 | Turani | M. U., III, 120-23; Alangir Nama, 44, 51, 55, Hatim Khan, 13a, 24a. |

Mughal Nobles with Arangir Nama by Akbar Ali M.A.L.L.R. Pl. D.

Jir. Pub. Range 1966, Hemen Smith 1968, Surinder Bush.

S. No. Name and Title

Rank

Racial Group

Source

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From,

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Sorry for the delay.