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RESEARCH ARTICLE

JAHANGIR'S (1627-1658) LEADERSHIP ENDEAVOURS IN STRENGTHENING THE CONTINUITY OF THE MUGHALS IN INDIA

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Abstract

Jahangir succeeded his father, Akbar after the latter stabilised Mughal rule in India. Although there are arguments that Jahangir did not achieve successes like his father, there were some endeavours by Jahangir which strengthened the continuity of Mughal rule. Hence, the purpose of this article is to examine his efforts to consolidate Mughal rule in India in his time. On the whole, this is a qualitative research using the methods of historical study and content analysis. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources and analysed. Research findings show that Jahangir was more focused on domestic development such as proclaiming *Dustur al-Amal* for administration. He also succeeded in putting down rebellions and developed culture and arts, including architecture. His own personality as a leader inclined him to be a patron of the arts, intellectual and cultural activities, as well as a believer of legal principles for social justice. Akbar's policy of expanding territories was not Jahangir's priority because he gave more attention to managing the crises of rebellion in Mughal territory.

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Introduction:-

According to Robinson (2007), Jahangir's rule witnessed the development of the Mughal Empire in the phase of consolidating power and glory of civilization. Jahangir continued from the basis founded by his father, Akbar. Due to this, the development phase of Mughal rule did not rely fully on Jahangir's leadership, but was closely associated with the fundamental system of Mughal rule established by Akbar. Robinson's statement marginalised Jahangir's role in Mughal rule as if Jahangir did not take any significant initiative to ensure the survival and continuity of the Empire. Is Robinson's statement acceptable or otherwise? Mughal history during Jahangir's era was frequently discussed in past writings, briefly or in detail. However, studies such as conducted by Richards (2008), Srivastava (1957), Qureshi (1984), and Fisher (2016) mostly touched on Mughal political development, particularly on the challenges to Jahangir's rule that he had to deal with. In that regard, the purpose of this article is to examine the history of his rule and illuminate his efforts in ensuring the continuity of the Mughal empire. This finding should add to information about Jahangir's rule, particularly in a broader context of discussion that is not limited to merely political development.

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Jahangir: Brief Biography

Jahangir inherited the Mughal empire in the year 1605AD. Jahangir, or his real name, Muhammad Sultan Salim, was born on 9th September 1569AD in Fatehpur Sikri (Rashid, 1974). According to Srivastava (1957), he was named after a sufi called Shaykh Salim Chishti by his father. Jahangir received his early education at age four years after a ceremony to celebrate the commencement of his education at Fatehpur Sikri on 28 th November 1573AD. He was given religious instruction by some Islamic scholars, such as Mawlana Mir Kalan Harvi, Shaykh Ahmad al-Sirhindi and Qutb al-Din Muhammad Khan Atga (Rashid, 1974). Later, Jahangir also studied other subjects such as Persian, Turkish, Arabic, Hindi and Sanskrit languages and literature, arithmetic, history, geography, science, botany, zoology, music and arts. The teacher who had a great impact on him was ‘Abd al-Rahman Khan Khanan, son of Bayram Khan. ‘Abd al-Rahman Khan Khanan was appointed by Akbar as Jahangir’s teacher because of his expertise in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Hindi and Sanskrit languages. Moreover, ‘Abd al-Rahman Khan Khanan was also a military commander and authoritative administrator. Due to his excellent qualifications, Akbar decided that he would be the best educator and guide for Jahangir in the intellectual, administrative and military aspects.

Jahangir’s upbringing and education by ‘Abd al-Rahman Khan Khanan was not limited to languages and literature, as Jahangir was also taught the intricacies of administration and military science. He was instructed in martial arts and weaponry. Based on this knowledge, Jahangir trained and acquired combat and hunting skills (Srivastava, 1957). As a rule, princes were given military and administrative training to prepare them before ascension to the throne, as they needed to be competent and authoritative rulers, with wisdom to deal with any kind of threats to the state or themselves or their subjects. Jahangir joined the Mughal military at age just 12 years. In a military campaign at Kabul in the year 1581AD, he was entrusted to lead a military force. In that campaign, he was given full authority to strategise military operations without any interference from anyone. Following that campaign, Jahangir’s ranking for service to the Mughal administration was raised from 10,000 *mansabdar* to 12,000 *mansabdar* in the year 1585AD. At the age of 15 years, Jahangir was married to his cousin, Man Bai, daughter of Raja Bhagwan Das, ruler of Amber, on 13th February 1585AD (Srivastava, 1957). The marriage was arranged by Akbar with the intention of strengthening relations between the Mughal Empire and the Rajput ruler. Hence, the strong position of the Mughal was reinforced by the support of the Hindu Rajput ruler through diplomatic relations as well as family ties.

Jahangir’s Leadership Endeavours

Jahangir ascended the throne on 3rd November 1605AD succeeding his father, Akbar who decided his son would inherit his legacy. The coronation ceremony was held in Agra, whereby he also announced his regal title as al-Sultan Abu al-Muzaffar Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir Padshah Ghazi (Khafi Khan, 1869). His coronation ceremony was graced with presentation of gifts from vassal states of the Mughal Empire. In addition, Jahangir also pardoned and released a number of prisoners, and minted coins incused with his name in honour of his inauguration (Burn, 1963). Jahangir’s achievement in Mughal politics, particularly in administration, was considered as average in comparison to Akbar’s. Akbar’s expansion of Mughal dominion to Indian territories was not continued by Jahangir in his rule. This gave rise to the perception that Jahangir was a weak and incapable ruler who did not give serious attention to administrative affairs. This opinion was reinforced by his habit of drinking alcohol which was said to affect his focus on governance, opening the way for his wife, Nur Jahan, to directly influence Mughal politics and administration (Srivastava, 1957). Hamka (2006) also described Nur Jahan’s excessive dominance in Mughal politics as the cause for the perception that Jahangir was incompetent and weak, leading to internal rebellion, especially involving the Mughal royals themselves.

There were some policies of Akbar that were not continued by Jahangir for certain reasons. For example, the policy of territorial expansion was not prioritised by Jahangir because the situation required him to put down rebellions which arose, particularly from among his own sons. Another matter which Jahangir did not pursue was the idea of *Din-i-Ilahi* (or known as *Tawhid-i-Ilahi* then) propounded by Akbar during his time. It was a syncretic religion to combine some elements of all religions in India and reconcile differences dividing the subjects. Nevertheless, discussion among religious scholars as happened during Akbar’s era, still took place during Jahangir’s time. In fact, he also took part in such discussions (Moosvi, 2007; Khan, 2011).

Dustur al-Amal Proclamation (Twelve Rules of Conduct or Orders)

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Jahangir failed to do something or make any contribution in his rule. He proclaimed a code, *Dustur al-Amal* (Rules of Conduct) for the welfare and betterment of the Empire. It contained 12 rules (Srivastava, 1957; al-Sadati, 2001) described as follows:

1. He abolished *tagma* and *meerwahi* toll taxes, and taxes *Subedars* imposed on the people for their expenses.
2. He ordered *jagirdars* to build gateways and inns (caravanserais), mosques and waterwells along the journey routes (every 30-40 kilometres) to ensure the safety and comfort of travellers.
3. He disallowed examining the caravan of merchants without the knowledge and consent of the owners.
4. He ordered that deceased person's property shall be inherited by his legal heirs. Unclaimed property would be surrendered to the state treasury for public welfare.
5. He prohibited against manufacturing and sale of intoxicants.
6. He disallowed mutilation of limbs and cutting the nose and ears of criminals.
7. He prohibited landlords from seizing farmers' land by force.
8. He ordered state hospitals to be established in every city, and physicians appointed in them. The cost of treatment shall be borne by from the revenue of his *khalisa* (crown land or his own personal funds).
9. He prohibited animal slaughter on Thursdays and Sundays, as Thursday is the coronation day of Jahangir and Sunday was the day of Akbar.
10. He reinstated all *mansabdars*, appointed during Akbar's reign, in their positions, and promoted them on merit.
11. He allowed Jagirs, known as *aima* and *madadgar*, granted to religious and charitable institutions to remain with them.
12. He ordered all the convicts, serving for longer periods, to be released from jail.

The *Dustur al-Amal* Proclamation proves that Jahangir aspired to establish individual freedom and secure property rights for his subjects. The Proclamation can be said to be his reminder to Mughal officers to serve with sincerity for the welfare of the common people and not to oppress them. This political approach was a continuation of his father's political vision for the betterment of the Empire. Akbar wanted the people to always feel secure and live peacefully under the auspices of the Mughal dominion. At the same time, the position of the Mughal aristocracy was increasingly respected in view of the close link between the principles of *Dustur al-Amal* and the aristocrats' duty to function properly.

Dealing with Political Threats and Internal Rebellions

In the context of strengthening political power, Jahangir turned his attention mainly to the problem of internal rebellion, instead of continuing Akbar's territorial expansion and spreading Mughal influence. The rebellion which happened in his time had to be dealt with as he would lose power if it was not quashed. When he had newly ascended the throne, his own son, Khusraw, rebelled against him because of dissatisfaction over his coronation. Jahangir was aware of Khusraw's action of gathering strength in Punjab, and he sent troops to put down the rebellion. His prompt action succeeded and Khusraw was captured, blinded and remained in prison until his death in the year 1622AD (Faruqi, 2012; Fisher, 2016).

Khusraw's rebellion against Jahangir created a domino situation in the Mughal political crisis, namely, a conflict between the Mughal State and the Sikhs. The fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjun, had supported Khusraw when he launched a rebellion against Jahangir (Richards, 2008). Jahangir saw it necessary to cut off and eliminate this support to Khusraw. Hence, Jahangir had Guru Arjun arrested and sentenced to death. There were claims that Jahangir's action was religiously motivated due to difference of religions. However, the main factor was political survival, the continuity of his reign. Guru Arjun's support for Khusraw was a threat to Mughal political control and sovereignty at the time. Hence, death sentence was appropriate for rebels and their allies even though it caused deterioration in the relationship between the Mughal state and the Sikhs. According to Schimmel (1980), the death sentence of Guru Arjun became the turning point for Sikh rebellion against the Mughal state, causing the Sikhs to change orientation from a religious-oriented to a militant movement.

In addition, Jahangir also faced another rebellion by his other son, Khurram (Shah Jahan). Khurram's rebellion followed protests against Nur Jahan's direct interference and dominance in Mughal politics. The competition for influence between Khurram and Nur Jahan caused Khurram to rebel against Jahangir, by his refusal to obey Jahangir's command to go to Kandahar and face a Safavid military attack. Upon Khurram's refusal, Jahangir ordered the army commander, Mahabat Khan, to fight Khurram. Jahangir's action bore results when Khurram admitted defeat and agreed to surrender his sons, Dara Shikuh and Awrangzib, to Jahangir as hostages. Jahangir's approach in demanding that Khurram's children be placed under his custody was a precautionary measure to monitor any move by Khurram. The children became the bait to hinder Khurram from rebelling once again.

Jahangir's focus on dealing with rebellion restored the stability of the Mughal Empire, even if for a temporary period. He was confronted with an external threat, namely the Safavid Empire which was constantly coveting the frontier fortress city in Kandahar province. The Safavids began their mission to make a bid for Kandahar province in the year 1606AD but failed due to the preparedness and prowess of the Mughal troops (Qureshi, 1984). However, the rebellion, particularly by the Mughal royals themselves, caused Jahangir's focus to be distracted and the Mughal power became shaky. For this reason, the Safavids took advantage of Jahangir's distraction and annexed Kandahar province in the year 1622AD.

Development of Arts and Architecture

Above all, Jahangir's rule witnessed the rapid development of civilizational aspects such as culture, particularly, the arts and architecture (Butron-Page, 1993). In fact, Jahangir himself was known as The Prince of Artists due to his great interest and knowledge in appreciating the value of works of arts, among them, paintings. (Jaffar, 1972). In addition, the field of architecture began to develop rapidly through constructing buildings characterised by the beauty of Mughal architecture, such as mosques, mausoleums and gardens. Development in this field continued and was said to reach its pinnacle in Shah Jahan's rule, in building the famous Taj Mahal.

Art was also employed as a political weapon when Jahangir faced competition from Shah 'Abbas, ruler of the Safavid Empire. Jahangir commissioned a painting depicting the two rulers locked in an embrace on a globe. The painting illustrated that both empires, Mughal and Safavid, were not enemies but that their leaders had brotherly ties. This painting helped to ease the political tension between the two empires, especially with regard to competing for power over Kandahar province, the bone of contention in their relationship (Richards, 2008).

With regard to Mughal architecture, Jahangir turned his attention to developing and beautifying the landscape of some cities of his transit, among them, Kabul, Ajmer and Mandu. These cities became temporary administrative centres of Mughal rule whenever he visited them. Hence, to make these cities interesting attractions, he ordered the building of palaces and gardens.. He also did the same in Kashmir, when he spent his vacations, by landscaping with ponds, pavillions, fountains, river streams and flower gardens which still exist today (Richards, 2008). In addition to his love for architectural beauty, Jahangir's approach also used aesthetic arts in his action to indicate and strengthen Mughal dominion in those places, particularly in frontier locations.

Conclusion:-

Jahangir's rule focused more on consolidation of Mughal rule compared to his father, Akbar who pursued an expansionist policy of Mughal territory and dominion. This led most researchers to describe Jahangir's achievements in administrative affairs as average and featureless with no distinctive attributes or aspects, in comparison to Akbar's rule that initiated various changes or reforms in political, economic and social aspects. In Jahangir's defence, the political situation during his rule forced him to make decisions to act, based on his abilities and strength. Some of his actions had strengthened Mughal dominion, ensuring the continuity of Mughal rule in India. His administrative Proclamation of *Dustur al-Amal* for the welfare and betterment of the people and the Empire, using strategy and military strength in dealing with political threat and internal rebellions, as well as the development of culture, arts and architecture in aesthetic landscaping by creating beautiful gardens and buildings in cities, may be described as Jahangir's appropriate approach in order to ensure the consolidation and continuity of Mughal dominion in India.

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