

Shah Jahan

Estimate the character of Shah Jahan as a ruler.

As a ruler, Shah Jahan occupies an important place in the History of India. In some respects, he was progressive and liberal like his father and grand-father while in some other fields, he was reactionary like his son Aurangzeb.

As a Man: Shah Jahan was a good hunter and horseman and was clever as a swordsman. His love for his wife Mumtaz Mahal knew no bounds while he had great affection for his children. Some historians, like V.A. Smith, however, find faults in his character. According to him, he was not a good son because he revolted against his father. He was neither a good brother because he got Prince Khusro killed in 1622 A.D.

As a General: Shah Jahan was a competent military general. He conquered Mewar and Kangra even during the reign of his father and proved successful in the Deccan campaigns where various experienced Mughal generals had failed. He snatched Kandhar from Iran and even conquered Balakh and Madakhshan in Central Asia. No doubt, later on Kandhar was lost and his Central Asian campaigns also proved a failure but it was not as much due to his weakness as to the degeneration of the Mughal army and laxity of the Mansabdars.

As an Administrator: Shah Jahan was a capable and a successful ruler. He divided his empire into 22 provinces and appointed capable officers to govern them. He did so much for the welfare of his subjects that foreign travelers like Tavernier remark that Shah Jahan behaved towards his subjects as a father does towards his children.

A Lover of Justice: Shah Jahan, like his father Jahangir, was a great lover of justice. He had fixed Wednesday as the day of justice. While administering justice, he did not spare even the highest officers. Foreign travellers (like Tavernier and Manucci) write that in the matter of administering justice, Shah Jahan was quite impartial.

As a Patron of Art and Literature: Shah Jahan was a great builder. His buildings like Taj Mahal, Jamia Masjid and Red Fort still enthrill us because of their grandeur and beauty. Undoubtedly in the field of architecture, his period was the golden period in the history of the Mughal Rule in India. Rich quality of literature both in Persian and Hindi was also produced during Shah Jahan's reign.

A Staunch Sunni Mussalman: In his religious views, Shah Jahan was in between Akbar and Aurangzeb. Like Akbar, he allowed the Hindus to hold high posts and did not try to reimpose Jazia and the pilgrimage tax. But some tinge of Aurangzeb's fanaticism is also seen in him. In attacking the Shia states of the Deccan, he was somewhat swayed by religious feelings. He had issued orders for the demolition of half-built temples.

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His Place in History: Keeping in view his personality as a whole, these weaknesses are insignificant. In history, he is regarded as the 'Prince of Builders'. He deserves full praise for establishing complete peace and prosperity in the country.

Discuss the changes which took place in the Mansabdari System after Akbar.

Establishment of the Mansabdari System: Akbar in order to bring reforms in his army introduced the Mansabdari system. A 'mansab' means position, status or rank. The system which Akbar adopted to determine the ranks of his government officials came to be known as the Mansabdari System. Every military and civil Government officials was given a Mansab and he was called a Mansabdar.

Chief Features. Following were the chief features of this system:

- 1) There were 33 categories of the Mansabdars. The smaller Mansabdar was head of 10 soldiers while the Mansabdar of the highest rank commanded 10,000 soldiers.
- 2) In order to judge the category of the Mansabdars the '**Zat**' and '**Sawar**' ranks were evolved. While the '**Zat**' rank signified the personal status of the individual in the imperial hierarchy and determined his salary, the '**Sawar**' rank denoted the number of horses he had to keep.
- 3) The Mansabdars were also required to maintain elephants, camels, mules and carts for the transportation purposes.
- 4) Handsome salaries were paid to the Mansabdars. A Mansabdar, head of 100 soldiers got Rs. 5,00 per month while who headed 1,000 soldiers got Rs. 4,400 per month, while Rs. 30,000 were paid to the Mansabdars who kept 5,000 soldiers.
- 5) Branding the horses was done and descriptive rolls of the soldiers were maintained.
- 6) There used to be physical checking of the soldiers and horses from time to time so that the Mansabdars might not deceive the king.
- 7) The different soldiers under a Mansabdar generally belonged to different classes.

Changes made in the Mansabdari System after Akbar: During the reign of Jahangir, the highest rank of the Mansabdars was raised from 5,000 to 7,000. Jahangir reduced the salaries of the Mansabdars. In the beginning of the Mansabdari system, each Mansabdar got Rs. 240 per annum per *sawar* which was reduced to Rs. 200.

Shah Jahan reduced the number of soldiers kept by these Mansabdars. Now each Mansabdar was required to keep 1/3 of the original number. Sometimes this number was reduced to 1/4 or 1/5 of the required number. In other words, during the reign of Shah Jahan, a Mansabdar of 3,000 kept only 1,000 soldiers. If any Mansabdar was given the additional rank of *Du-Aspah Sih-Aspah*, he could keep 2,000 soldiers.

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The salaries of the Mansabdars were determined in the form of rupees but they were paid their milaries in the form of jagirs also. Because of these continuous cuts in their salaries and day-to-day orders to keep more troops within that amount, there arose the feelings of bitterness among the Mansabdars. But the Mughal Emperors soon smelt this danger and reduced the number of horses and soldiers to be kept by the Mansabdars.

The salary of the Mansabdars was paid on the monthly basis say 10 months, 8 months and even less than this also. Later on, the number of horses was also reduced. Due to the shortage of horses during the reign of Shah Jahan the reduction had an adverse effect on the army. The practice of branding the horses was there but its execution was neither regular nor proper and consequently the empire had to suffer because of that lap.

War of Succession among the sons of Shah Jahan: - Aurangzeb's Brothers: Aurangzeb was the third son of Shah Jahan. He had three more brothers- Dara, Shuja and Murad. (1) Dura was the eldest son of Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan liked him very much. He was the Subedar of the Punjab and Multan. He was very pious and held liberal views. He, however, liked administrative and military abilities. He was proud and was also weak in judging human character. (2) Shuja was a Subedar of Bengal. He was brave but lazy and indulged in sensuous pleasures. (3) Murad was the SUBedar of Gujarat. He was known for his bravery and military efficiency. He was, however, a drunkard. Moreover, he was blank in politics and was easily taken in by other. (4) Aurangzeb was the SUBedar of the Deccan. He was cleverest of all. He was an able administrator and successful general. He was also an adept politician. He was successful in winning the favour of different chiefs of both the communities.

There were many causes for the war of succession among the sons of Shah Jahan:

- 1) There was no law of succession among the muslims. Therefore, every prince laid claim to the throne on the basis of his strength. Whosoever waqs the strongest succeeded in usurping the throne. The victor generally used to put to death his other opponents.
- 2) Shah Jahan had decided to appoint Dara as his successor. He favoured Dara but his other sons took it all. They were prepared to go to war on this issue.
- 3) The courtiers also precipitated the whole affairs for their selfish motives.
- 4) All the princes were equally strong. They were trained in the art of warfare and administration. They had participated in several expeditions as they were the Subedars of different provinces.
- 5) Aurangzeb was a very ambitious person. He wanted to grab the throne at any cast. Soon, the war of succession broke out among the brothers of Aurangzeb in 1658 A. D.

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Causes of Aurangzeb's Success: (1) Aurangzeb was a great diplomat. He succeeded in winning over his brothers whereas Dara was unsuccessful. (2) Aurangzeb was a better soldier and more successful as a general as compared to his brothers. He had much experience of battles. (3) The Hindu and Muslim troopers sided with Aurangzeb in great number. (4) Aurangzeb's army was more disciplined and trained than that of Dara's. (5) Shah Jahan committed a blunder by not going to the battle field before the Battle of Samurgarh started. (6) Dara also committed some mistakes. He did not wait for the troops of Raja Jai Singh and Sulaiman Shikoh to return. He also did not attack the tired troops of Aurangzeb at Samurgarh. (7) He also alighted from the elephant and rode on a horse-back in the midst of the battle which created confusion in his troops.
