Introduction

The history of Aurangzib is practically the history of India for sixty years. His own reign (1658—1707) covers the second half of the 17th century and stands forth as a most important epoch in the annals of our country. Under him the Mughal empire reached its greatest extent, and the largest single State ever known in India from the dawn of history to the rise of the British power was formed. From Ghazni to Chatgaon, from Kashmir to the Karnatak, the continent of India obeyed one sceptre; and beyond this region, in far-off Ladak and Malabar, the suzerainty of the same ruler was proclaimed from the pulpit. Islam made its last onward movement in India in this reign.

The empire thus formed, while unprecedented in size, was also one political unit. Its parts were governed not by the mediation of sub-kings, but directly by the servants of the Crown. Herein Aurangzib’s Indian empire was vaster than that of Asoka, or Samudra-gupta or Harsha-vardhan. No provincial governor had as yet set up his own rule and withheld revenue and obedience from the central power. There were rebellions here and there, but no other crowned head raised itself to defy the Emperor of Delhi even in any province.

But the reign that saw the formation of the greatest Indian empire of pre-British days, witnessed also unmistakable signs of its commencing decline and disruption. Long before Nadir Shah the Persian or Ahmad Shah the Afghan proved the Padishah to be an impotent shadow of royalty and Delhi the mere memory of past greatness, long before the Maratha confederacy hid beneath its super-imposed sway the regular monarchy of the land,—even before Aurangzib closed his eyes, the Mughal empire had turned bankrupt in finance and prestige, the administration had broken down, the imperial power had confessed its failure to maintain order and hold this vast realm together.
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The reign of Aurangzib is also marked by the upspringing of the Maratha nationality out of the ashes of their short-lived kingship, and by the appearance of the Sikh sect in the role of warriors and armed opponents of the ruling power. Thus, the supreme factors of Indian history in the 18th and early 19th centuries owe their origin to Aurangzib's reign and policy. In the Deccan, after kings like Adil Shah and Qutb Shah, Shambhuji and Rajaram, had bowed low before the Mughal blast, the people asserted themselves and drove back the spoiler from the North. To the Marathas, alone among the Indian peoples, belongs the glory of giving the first successful check to the onward advance of the Mughal power and saving their fatherland from foreign encroachment. Their development into conquerors and universal raiders belongs to the next age.

In the very reign in which the Mughal crescent rounded to fulness and then began to wane visibly, the first glow of a new dawn was distinctly seen in our political sky. The future lords of our country's destiny gained a firm and safe footing on its soil. Madras and Bombay became presidencies of the English East India Company in 1653 and 1687 respectively; Calcutta was founded in 1690. The places of shelter thus gained by the Europeans formed a dominion within a dominion, and were fortified to defy the greatest onslaughts of the "country powers". The foreign "merchant adventurers" here began their first experiments in Oriental government and legislation,—experiments which were destined in the fulness of time to result in an empire larger than that of the Romans and more populous than that of Charles V, and a civilised and progressive administration to which the world, ancient or modern, affords no parallel.

The end of the 17th century reveals the Mughal empire as rotten at the core. The grand edifice which Akbar had built up and Shah Jahan and Aurangzib had extended, still looked fair as before, but it was ready to tumble down like a house of cards at the first breath of foreign invasion. The treasury was empty. The imperial army knew itself defeated and recoiled from its foes. The centrifugal forces were asserting themselves successfully, and the empire was ready for disruption. The moral weakness of the empire was
even greater than the material: the Government no longer commanded the awe of its subjects; the public servants had lost honesty and efficiency; ministers and princes alike lacked statesmanship and ability; the army broke down as an instrument of force. In letter after letter the aged Aurungzbib mourns over the utter incapacity of his officers and sons and chastises them with the sharpness of his pen, but in despair of a remedy. Contemporaries like Bhimsen and Khafi Khan sadly contrast the misery and degradation of the nobles and the people alike in Aurungzbib's closing years with the glory of the empire under his forefathers, and wonder why it was so.

Why was it so? The ruler was free from vice, stupidity, and sloth. His intellectual keenness was proverbial, and at the same time he took to the business of governing with all the ardour which men usually display in the pursuit of pleasure. In industry and attention to public affairs he could not be surpassed by any clerk. His patience and perseverance were as remarkable as his love of discipline and order. In private life he was simple and abstemious like a hermit. He faced the privations of a campaign or a forced march as uncomplainingly as the most seasoned private. No terror could daunt his heart, no weakness or pity melt it. Of the wisdom of the ancients which can be gathered from ethical books, he was a master. He had, besides, undergone a long and successful probation in war and diplomacy in his father's lifetime.

And yet the result of fifty years' rule by such a sovereign was failure and chaos! The cause of this political paradox is to be found in Aurungzbib's policy and conduct. Hence his reign is an object of supreme interest to the student of political philosophy no less than to the student of Indian history.

Happily, the materials for a study of it are abundant in Persian, the literary language of Mughal India. First, we have the official annals,—the Padishahnamah (in three sections by three writers) and the Alamgirnamah—which cover the 41 years lying between the accession of Shah Jahan and the eleventh year of Aurungzbib's reign. These works were written by order, on the basis of the State papers preserved in the imperial archives, such as official corres-
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respondence, despatches, news-letters, treaties and revenue returns. They are rich in dates and topographical details of the utmost value and accuracy. For the last forty years of Aurangzib’s reign we have the concise Masir-i-Alamgiri, compiled from the same class of official records, but after his death.

Next come a class of private histories, like those of Masum, Aqil Khan, a Razbhani soldier in Bengal (metrical), and Khafi Khan. These were written by officials, but, not having been meant for the Emperor’s eyes, they supply us with many of the facts suppressed in the Court annals, though their dates and names are sometimes inaccurate and their descriptions meagre. They, however, contain many personal traits and graphic touches which the more formal official histories have excluded.

There are even two histories of Aurangazib’s reign written by Hindus in the Persian tongue. One is the Nuskha-i-Dilkasha by Bhimsen Burhanpuri, the business man of Aurangzib’s general Dalpat Rao Bundela. This author was an active traveller, with a good eye for topographical details, and a careful recorder of all he saw from Mathura to Malabar. His work is of special value for Deccan affairs, because he was brought up and spent nearly all his life there. The other is the Fatuhat-i-Alamgiri of Ishwardas Nagar, who long served the Shaikh-ul-Islam and lived at Pattan in Gujrat. This work is of great importance for Rajput affairs.

Besides these general histories of the reign, we have monographs in Persian touching only particular episodes or personages of the time,—such as Niamat Khan Ali’s account of the siege of Golkonda, Shihab-ud-din Talish’s diary of the conquest of Kuch Bihar, Assam and Chatgaon, the memoirs of Iradat Khan and of some other servants of Bahadur Shah I which start from the closing years of Aurangzib’s reign. Of the two Deccani kingdoms, Golconda and Bijapur, we have separate histories, which throw light on the dealings of the Mughal Government with them. On the Maratha side there are chronicles (bakhars) of Shivaji, Sham-bhuji, and Rajaram written by their officers and others. A vast number of historical letters of the 17th century in Marathi have been printed, but they usually throw only side-lights on history, being of the nature of legal documents and not State papers properly so
called. For Assam affairs we have the extremely valuable indigenous annals called *Burunjis*.

Most fortunately, for several portions of Aurangzib's reign I have been able to secure the very raw materials of history,—a source of information even more valuable than the contemporary official annals described above. These are the manuscript newsletters of the imperial Court (*akhbarat-i-darbar-i-muala*) preserved at Jaipur and in the Royal Asiatic Society's library (London) and the letters of the actors in the political drama of the 17th century, of which nearly six thousand are in my possession. In them we see events as they happened day by day, and not as they were dressed up afterwards by writers with a purpose. In them we see the actual hopes and fears, plans and opinions of those who made Indian history. To this class belong the letters of Aurangzib, forming many different and bulky collections. All these different sources,—many of them not even alluded to here,—will be described in the bibliography at the end of this work.

The European travellers, Tavernier, Bernier, Careri and Manucci, who visited India in this reign, have left long accounts of the country. Their works are of undoubted value as throwing light on the condition of the people, the state of trade and industry, and the history of the Christian churches in India. Moreover, the criticism of Indian institutions by foreign observers has a freshness and weight all its own. But of the political history of India, apart from the few events in which they took part or which they personally witnessed, their report merely reproduced the bazar rumours and the stories current among the populace, and cannot be set against the evidence of contemporary histories and letters in Persian. This fact will be proved by illustrations in the bibliography.

I cannot place this history before the public without acknowledging the deep debt of gratitude I owe to the late Mr. William Irvine, I.C.S., the author of the *Later Mughals*. He freely lent me his own Persian MSS., took great pains in securing on my behalf permission from European public libraries to take copies of their MSS., and cheap rotographs in London and Paris. In every difficulty and doubt that I have appealed to him, he has given prompt assistance and advice.
Mr. Irvine criticised and emended the first five chapters of this history, as carefully and minutely as if it were his own work.

Dr. C. R. Wilson, the author of the Early Annals of the English in Bengal, who encouraged my historical studies and recommended me, unsolicited, to the Bengal Government for aid in paying for transcripts of Persian MSS. in England and the Continent (£40), is also beyond the reach of my thanks. The Secretary of State for India and the Royal Asiatic Society of London have lent me Persian MSS. from their libraries on several occasions, for which priceless help I am deeply indebted to them.

My thanks are also due to Sir Edward A. Gait, who secured for me permission to copy the Buranjis belonging to the Assam Government and the rich Persian and Hindi archives of the Jaipur State, and to Sir William Foster and M. Gabriel Ferrand, who have assisted me in getting transcripts from the records of the India Office in London, and the French archives in Paris. Kind helpers in India have been too many to be separately named.

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The first edition of these two initial volumes was published in July 1912. In the second edition (issued in April, 1925) I have not only subjected the book to a careful revision and correction, but also utilised the new materials acquired during the intervening thirteen years. The chief among these additional sources are the copious correspondence between Jai Singh and the imperial Court preserved in the Jaipur Record Office, the more slender volume of Mughal-Maratha correspondence printed by Rajwade and others or preserved in the Persian version in Rao Bahadur D.B. Parasnis’s library at Satara, a contemporary metrical history (Aurangnamah) in the unique Haidarabad copy, and the letter-books of the Bijapur and Golkonda States.

The printing charges are now exactly double of what they were when the first edition was issued, and the prices of paper and binding materials are half as much again. And yet I have tried to suit the Indian reader by bringing out this second edition at the reduced price of Rs. 5 for the two volumes together (in the place of Rs. 7).—
while using a larger type than in the first edition. The introduction and the foot-notes have been somewhat compressed in order to save space, and the bibliography (first part) removed from the end of the second volume to a separate volume of Index and Sources which is now in preparation.

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