CHAPTER - II
CHAPTER-II

Society of 16th and 17th Century as Depicted in the Accounts of Foreign Travellers

The Indian society during the period was stratified primarily into three sections—upper, middle and lower. While the king and his nobility formed the upper section, the court poets, physicians, traders, artisans and farmers comprised the middle and the masses constituted the lower section.

The sovereign was the highest authority heading the social hierarchy and under him were the nobility who were conferred with high offices in the state. The nobility played an active role in assisting the ruler in implementing the policies of state. The mansabdars and jagirdars who formed a large part of this section maintained landed estates, used luxury products sumptuously and indulged in a life of self-indulgence and licentiousness.

The nobles led a comfortable and marvelous lifestyle, and foreign visitors provide a pleasing picture of the life of the nobility. Articles of luxury like ornaments, perfumes, betel-leaves and a number of other stimulants were in great demand, with foreign merchants carrying on a brisk and prosperous trade in these articles. According to Nuniz, people in Vijayanagara ate almost everything, except the flesh of oxen or cows. Mention is also made of intoxicants comprising the usual liquor, among which a drink known as the maireira was very popular.

The Social Structure

The Indian social structure during the sixteenth and the seventeenth century was by no mean homogenous in character.\(^1\) It was mainly comprised of the Muslims and the Hindus in great majority during the medieval period but at the opening of the sixteenth century there was incorporation of the Portuguese in the Indian population who were never comparable to the other two elements i.e., the Muslims and the Hindus. The Portuguese presence was felt at the west coast of India by all the foreign observers of the sixteenth century.

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The inhabitants and natives of India were divided into five sects namely – (1) The Hindus (natives), (2) The Moguls (Conquerors by land), (3) The Portuguese (the first discoverer), (4) Dutch, English, Strangers and (5) Parsies. Besides natives there were “Persians, Tartars, Abissinians, Armenians, Jews, Christians, Mahometans, and others: but the most universal Religions are the Mahometans, and the Pagan.”

The main population was generally constituted by the Muslims and the Hindus but the distribution of others could not be ignored scattered in some region.

The foreign travellers found the Indian society dominated by the Muslims as, “they were neither a separate nation in India, though they were the leaders of the heterogeneous Indian society in culture and civilization, both spiritual and material so far as the public life in general was concerned.”

In the Muslim society the status of an individual rested, not on his birth as in the caste system, but on his religious faith. All the believers were equals in society. This was in keeping with the message of Islam, an uncompromising monotheistic religion.

But with the passage of time especially after the orthodox Caliphate arose diversity in Islam. According to Tavernier, this diversity that exists among the Muslims consist two reasons. First reason is due to the different explanations given to Quran and the other reason is holding different opinions which they entertain regarding the first successor of Prophet Muhammad. Further Tavernier observed, “This cause two sects, entirely opposed to one another, have sprung; the one calling itself the Sunnis is followed by the Turks, the other the Shias, which is the sect of the Persians.”

The other foreign observers had also felt this heterogeneity of the Muslim society in India during the period under study. The Muslim society in India was though theoretically presented itself to, “the superficial view as prima facie a solid homogeneous block held together by the cement of Islam, it was in reality a

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6 Ibid.
composite community having within its fold representatives of races from all over the Muslim world and Hindu converts from all grades of society.\(^7\)

A large number of Muslims had entered India from the north-west in the five or six centuries preceding the establishment of Akbar's Empire. They immigrated to Indian soil with the intention to make it their new home. So they inter-married with the Indian people and had become Indian in the real sense by assimilating well with the Indian people and had become Indian in the real sense by assimilating well with the Indian peoples. Their immigration effected conversion on a very large scale. The Hindu-converts came to be known as *Nau-Muslims*.\(^8\)

Both the *Nau-Muslims* (convertee) who were already Indian and the 'Immigrant Muslims' were collectively formed a class of Muslim known as 'Indian Muslims' or 'Hindustani Musalmans':\(^9\) They were popularly known as 'sheikhzadas' and were also posted in the state services but were in minority and their position was always inferior to other classes of the nobility.

Indian Muslims are described by Manucci as those 'who are descended from the family of Mohammad but very remote from the Sayyids. This race holds land and also remains in service at the courts, great and petty; they are very subtle, of great intelligence, very litigious and great lawyers. Others became recluses and holy men and by that false pretence gained a living'.\(^10\) They came to the limelight between 1560 and 1575 when Akbar took to reorganizing his nobility. Thenceforth, they were treated with special favour and carved out a place of distinction in the Mughal nobility.

They enjoyed high mansabs and important military and administrative positions during Shahjahan's period too. In the first phase, their number was 32 out of 342. They improved their position in 1637-41, as their number was 28 out of 255 mansabdars. In the last phase (1642-58), they improved further, as they numbered 59 out of the total of 448.\(^11\)

\(^3\) Yasin, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
The Muslim nobility was predominately Turanis, Iranis and Afghans. Abyssinian and Arabs also constituted the nobility but were much lesser in numbers. These Muslims were outsiders unlike the Indian muslims who came with the sovereign of their time to assist them in running the administration properly. At Goa, there were also many Persians, Arabian, and Abexijans, some (of them) Christians, and some (of them) Moors.

The ruling house belonged to the Turani stock and Shahjahan showed more attachment to it by styling himself as ‘Sahib Qiran-i-sani’. In the first phase (1628-36), they numbered 53 out of 342. They improved during 1637-41, as there were 50 Turanis out of the total of 255. With a slight addition, almost the same strength was there in the last phase (1642-58), i.e., 96 out of 448.

A great change in the composition of Mughal nobility occurred between 1540 and 1555. The Irani nobility started increasing its power. Abul Fazl give the list thus; among 57 nobles who accompanied Humayun to India were 27 Turanis and 21 Iranis while the rest of them cannot be identified.

The Iranis emerged as a powerful faction even during the reign of Akbar due to their ‘undivided support’ to the Mughal crown. The process continued during Jahangir’s reign. Their excellent services, devotion and sincerity carved out a distinct place for them in the court of Jahangir.

The Iranis maintained their improved and elevated position during Shahjahan’s reign. They emerged as the only dominant group of nobles. In spite of all

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15 Husain, Afzal, the Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir, A Study of Family Groups, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1999, p. 6.
fluctuations in the number of the nobility and in the political currents of this period, *Iranis* maintained their hold as the only major faction of Shahjahan’s nobility. There were 93 *Iranis* in all out of 342 mansabdars in the first phase (1628-36). During 1637-41, when a considerable decline may be seen in the overall strength, they improved their position and numbered 75 out of 255. In the third phase (1642-58), out of 448 mansabdars, 132 were *Iranis*.

It is preserved in the travelogues that the classes of nobility were also divided into different types on the basis of region like there were two kinds of Turkish soldiers found in India, those of Asia, to whom the name *Turk* is given, and those of Europe, who are mostly from Constantinople, which has been called *Rumis* both by Indians and Portuguese.17

The Afghans who originally hailed from the valley of the Sulaiman Range18 were divided into Indian *Pathans* and the *Vilayati Pathans* of Roh residing in the hilly regions beyond the Indus and to the West of it. The Indian or *Hindustani Pathan* had established themselves all over India and were considered inferior to the *Vilayati Pathan*. “In spite of these dissensions they all are one race, descended from an ancient prince called Pasto (Pashtu).”19 Their language is different from Indian speech as they are believed of Mahomedan faith. Yet they differed in their sects, some venerate Muhammad, others ‘Ali, others Usman’, and others some other disciple of the false prophet.20

The Afghans had a say in the political life of India since the days of the sultans of Delhi. Under Balban, the Khaljis and Tughlaqs, they were trusted for their bravery and were favoured by the rulers. However, they really came to the limelight during the Sayyid period, when the Lodhi Afghans ultimately acquired real authority.21 Right from the days of Babur down to Akbar, there had been an almost constant armed tussle between the Mughals and the Afghans. Akbar had no trust in them due to his bitter experience.22 But they rose to eminence during Jahangir’s period.23 Khan-e- Jahan Lodhi came so close to the emperor that he had no rivals at

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20 Ibid.
22 Ibid. pp. 32-82.
23 Ibid. pp. 89-114.
the court.

Shahjahan started his regime with a normal, favourable policy towards the Afghans. In 1628-36, they were 37 out of 342, but thereafter a gradual decline in their overall strength can be seen. In the second phase (1637-41), their number was 24 out of 255. Similarly, they suffered a decline in the last phase as they numbered only 38 out of 448 mansabdars.

The term "Mughal" was the common epithet which denoted the entire foreign element in the Muslim population of Hindustan. Originally it stood for the house of Timur and their followers. Bernier says, "To be considered a Mogol, it is enough if a foreigner have a white face and profess Mohametanism", such as Persians, Turks, Arabs and Uzbeks.

Hindu society during the period under review was caste-ridden and based on the traditional Varnashrama Dharma. It is a system of hereditary social ranking associated with Hinduism, which governs social relations and the distribution of power in Hindu society. It is both a cultural and economic system of stratification.

This caste system originated from racial pride and colour prejudice which became the dominant feature of the society. The caste system was originally a trade guild, like the guilds of Medieval Europe, crystallized by centuries of custom. Each caste has it dharma or duties. Absolutely speaking, it was racial in origin, regional in tenacity, occupational in convenience, which proved a stereotyped characteristic. The link of the caste system or Hindu social chain were so strongly and ingeniously forged that nothing was able to break them.

The four principal castes among the Hindus are the Brahman, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and the Sudra. Tavernier found seventy-two castes among Hindus that

29 Mundy, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 94.
could be reduced to four principal castes. Careri observed eighty-four tribes (castes) among Hindus.

The Brahmans were the highest caste whose main function was to study, teach, perform pujas, offer sacrifices and render advice administration. The Brahmans were divided into ten several sects, some of them were known as Marathas, Telanga, Canara, Drovaras and Gujarati. Besides, the secular Brahmans there were religious or monastical Brahmans, who were called Jogis. Some of the Brahmans were very ingenious good astronomers, familiar with the course of stars, and usually prepare to foretell the weather. They reckon eclipses very clearly and they also do a great deal of fortune telling. They were kept at court by the king.

The Kshatriyas formed the warrior class and their primary duty was the protection of the people. They had been created to maintain the divine order and their function was regarded to be of great importance. The class of Rajput, lives in the hill country, and is excellent soldiers, but many of them have nevertheless been brought into subjection by the king and his father. Economically, the Kshatriyas belonged to the prosperous section of society; paid well in the army and getting tax relief as officers of the state, the Kshatriya led a life of ease and luxury. During the times of distress, a Kshatriya was allowed to adopt the Vaishya’s mode of living.

Primarily, the Vaishyas was an agriculturist, cultivation and cattle rearing were his main occupation. At the end of Vedic period, there began a capitalist economy, and this class occupied a great importance. They have their relation with the foreign merchant and internal business also.

The status of the three classes was traditional. But the Shudras in religion and social matters guided by their own tradition and usage. He may attain higher caste in another birth only after being mild and servitude. In a more realistic manner, the

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51 Careri, op. cit., p. 254.
53 Careri, op. cit., p. 255.
54 Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 76.
56 Careri, op. cit., p. 255.
57 Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 77.
Arthasastra enumerates the Shudras' occupation as service of the twice-born, agriculture, cattle rearing, trade and the profession of the artisan and actor.⁴¹ There were the people called Antyaja, who followed Shudras for rendering various kinds of services, who are not reckoned amongst any caste but only as members of a certain craft or profession.⁴²

Tavernier writes, "The remainders of the people, who do not belong to any of these four castes, are called Pauzecour."⁴³ The Panchamas was the fifth caste with their innumerable division of untouchable and unapproachable. The vast majority of origins of India belong to the fifth caste and these together with the Sudra form the bulk of Hindu population.⁴⁴

Some of the lower caste Hindus, notably in Bengal and certain other parts had been converted into Islam and some high castes in the Punjab and Kashmir had in the same manner been compelled to abandon their ancestral religion. Several new sub-castes had come into existence during this period such as the Kazi, the Teshkhani and the Agha, sub-castes among the Brahmans of Kashmir, Munshis among those of Gujarat, Qanungo and Raizada among the Kayastha and Bakshis and Mehta among the first three higher castes in several parts of the country.⁴⁵ Babur in his memoirs says that another good thing in Hindustan is that it has unnumbered and endless workmen of every sort of work and for everything which has done that work or that thing from father to son.⁴⁶

The hereditary character of the profession and the scant responsibility of their jobs led them to live a group life of isolation and gave them a close knit character of caste; also it divided the Hindu society into compartments.

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⁴² Ovington, op. cit., p. 165.
⁴⁵ Careri, op. cit., p. 256.
Food and Drink

During the period under study the people in India were both vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian. There is a general misconception prevalent that the Hindus were pure vegetarian and the Muslims non-vegetarian. But there are many instances in the accounts of the foreign travellers that shed much light on some sects of Hindus being non-vegetarian in taste.

Among the Hindu castes, the Brahmans were strictly vegetarian. Such strictness in food habit cannot be seen in the other three castes of the Hindu Varnashrama Dharma. Some of the sects of the above three castes followed the non-vegetarian pattern of food habit as reported by our travellers also.

Pelsaert writes that some sects of Kshastriyas were not so strict in their belief and ate goat’s or sheep’s flesh.\(^47\) The king of Vijayanagar himself followed the non-vegetarian food habit. The Portuguese traveller Nuniz writes,

"These kings of Bissnagar (Vijayanagar) eat all kinds of things, but not the flesh of oxen or cows, which they never kill in all the country, because they worship them. They eat mutton, pork, venison, partridge, hares, doves, quails, and all kinds of birds and rats and cats and lizards all of which are sold in the market of the city of Bissnagar. Everything has to be sold alive, so that each one may know what he buys – this at least so far as concerns games – and there are fish from rivers in large quantities."\(^48\)

The population of Northern India was comprised of Muslims and the food habit of a Muslim is generally non-vegetarian.\(^49\) Aristocracy and the nobility classes who represented the Muslim higher class had an extra liking for non-vegetarian items which can be guessed from the dishes prepared in their kitchens.

All of the great Mughal Emperors maintained a well-organised and expensive royal kitchen, with a large number of officials, big and small, and their subordinate

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\(^47\) Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 76.
staff. The Muslim nobles were accustomed to lavish meals. Twenty dishes were
served at the tables of the nobles at a time and sometimes the number went even
beyond fifty. Pelsaert refer to the diet of the Muslim upper classes thus, "The food
consists of birinj, aeshalia, polleb (yellow, red, green or black), zueyla, dupiaza, also
roast meats and various other good courses, served on very large dishes, with too
little butter and too much spice for our taste...."51

On special festive occasions the banquets and feasts of the nobility were
conspicuous for their grandeur and the variety of food as well as other necessary
requirements. On an average, each guest was served with twenty to fifty rich dishes.
However, it can be undoubtedly asserted that there might have been huge wastage of
good food on such joyful occasion, although vast crowd of menials, servants and
beggars was always at hand to partake of such leavings.

The Muslims followed the prohibition of their religion with regard to food,
e.g. it was forbidden to take pork and some other flesh food or take the flesh of an
animal, not properly slaughtered. But for these restrictions, they were generally free to
cook and eat whatever and wherever they liked. Meat of different kinds was generally
taken on all occasions. Sometimes adulterated meat was also sold.52 The dining table
appears to have been very simple without the use of napkins or table cloths.53

Emperor Akbar was very fond of dainty dishes of different varieties. In the
course of twenty- four hours his majesty eats but once, and leaves off, before he is
fully satisfied; neither is there any fixed time for this meal, but the servants have
always so far ready that in the space of an hour, after the order has been given, a
hundred dishes are served up."54 The dishes prepared in the royal kitchen of Akbar
can be categorised under three broader heads.55 In Sufiyana56 dishes meat was not

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51 Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 68. 'Birinj' and 'Dupiaza' have already been described above in connection with Akbar's kitchen. 'Polleb' may be a perversion of Pullao. 'Aeshalia' may mean spiced meat, and 'zueyla' refers to spiced wheaten cakes.
52 Bernier, op. cit., p. 250.
53 Careri, op. cit., p. 247.
54 Ain, op. cit., Vol I, p. 59.
55 Ibid, p. 61.
56 Ibid, pp. 61-62 and 64-65.
used. Second variety was prepared meat, rice, etc. The dishes of third category were
prepared with meat and different kinds of spices.

Under Jahangir and Shahjahan the trend of preparation of sumptuous dishes
continued in the royal kitchen. Under Aurangzeb, who was a man of simple tastes and
habits, the traditional magnificence of the royal kitchen might have dimmed to a
remarkable extent. From Manucci’s account it is however clear that emperor
Aurangzeb was not altogether devoid of the fondness for delicious dishes, and he also
appears to have maintained a costly kitchen. “Every day one thousand rupees are
disbursed for the expenses of the king’s kitchen, and the officials are required to
furnish there from all that is necessary. They have to lay before the Prince a fixed
number of ragouts and different dishes in vessels of China porcelain placed on gold
stands.”

The middle and upper classes invariably used wheat flour, boiled rice and
cooked vegetables of various sorts. Hindus, in general being vegetarians, confined
themselves to pulses, curd, butter, oil, milk and its several preparations as khir and
khowa. Ghee and cheese were also freely used by them. Curd or dahi was usually
taken at noon.

The favourite dish of the Muhammadans was meat in its several preparations.
They freely took beef, mutton, fish, flesh of goats, sheep and other beasts and birds of
prey. With this were mixed achars, spices, cloves, cinnamon, pepper and many
other condiments to increase the flavour and met their appetite. They had a special
taste for achars of mangoes and cloves. The chappatis of the rich made of fine

57 Careri, op. cit., p. 237. Here he refers to the Emperor’s earning his bread by his own means.
60 Monserrate, Father Antonio, Mongolicae legationis Commentarius, ed., John S. Hoyland (tr.) and
S.N. Banerjee (annotator). Commentary of Father Monserrate, 1922, Asian Publishers, Jalandhar,
1993, p. 8, Mandelslo, John Albert De, Mandelslo’s Travels in Western India (1638-1639), ed.
M.S. Commissariat, Oxford University Press, London, 1931, Asian Educational Services, New
Delhi, 1995, p. 68, Ovington, op. cit., p. 190.
67 Ibid.
white flour kneaded with 15% ghee were called 'rogmani'. When mixed with sugar it tasted like palm cake. On special occasions white loaves kneaded with milk and butter and seasoned with fennel and poppy seeds were prepared. Sometimes their bread was made of khuskak.

The vegetarian dishes generally meant for Hindus were of a special quality containing a major portion of butter, several species of pulses, herbs, vegetables and rice particularly 'birinje'. Detailed list of various vegetables, meats and sweet dishes are provided in Ain. Similarly, Muhammadans prepared rich and aromatic birinjes as qabuli, dudhibiryan, qimah, palao and pudding of rice mixed with almonds and raisins and strewn with butter and pepper.

Sweet dishes consisted of halwa, sweetmeats and comfits prepared from refined sugar and faluda. Various conserves of water melons, grapes, lemons, oranges perfumed with rose water, musk and grey ambergris were also kept ready.

The flesh of domesticated and wild animals and birds roasted, fried and made into soup, was their daily food. Patridges, ducks and hares, when available, too, formed part of their dishes. An idea of the variety of dishes served at a highly placed Muhammadan’s dinner can be had from the description of Asaf Khan’s banquet to Sir Thomas Roe and that of a Governor of Ahmedabad to Mandelslo.

The lower section comprising Hindus and Muslims in society depended on simple food. Khichari was the common food of the lower class that has been referred to by almost all travellers. Pelsaert describes it as composed of green pulse mixed with rice and cooked with water over a little fire. Usually a little butter and salt

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68 Ain, op. cit., Vol I, p. 61.
69 Manrique, op. cit., Vol II, p. 188. Roghani is bread with a great deal of ghee.
70 Ibid.
71 Ain, op. cit., Vol I, p. 61.
72 Ibid, p. 59.
74 Bernier, op. cit., p. 252.
76 Mandelslo, op. cit., p. 69.
77 Bernier, op. cit., p. 249.
78 Mandelslo, op. cit., pp. 64 & 263. Tavernier, op. cit., p. 124, Ovington, op. cit., p. 183. Khichari seems to have been more common in eastern and southern India.
Khichdi of bajra (a mixture of split peas and millet boiled together) was the peculiar food. The Gujaratis also called it *Laziza*.

Wheat, however, was the primary food of the people of the North who ate *chappatis* of wheat or barley flour dipped in a little butter. The staple food of the generality of the people in the morning was limited to *jawar* or *bajra* flour kneaded with brown sugar and water. There was a light refreshments in the afternoon in the form of some parched pulse or other grains. The middle class, comprising shopkeepers, traders, merchants, brokers and bankers, were well off. They took their meals thrice daily, viz., at 8 or 9 in the morning, 4 or 5 in the afternoon and 8 or 9 at night.

Indians baked their loaves called *chappatis* on iron plates, a frying pan or on an oven over a fire of cow-dung instead of fuel. The utensils used in Hindu kitchens, as plates, cups, water jugs, candlesticks, etc., were all made of brass or bronze, as these had to be scrubbed clean every time they were used. Linschoten saw people at Goa drink out of a "copper kan"; but they used earthenware for cooking purposes. The utensils used in Muslim kitchens were either earthenware or made from copper. The Mughal kings generally used gold or silver utensils and were fond of precious China and glassware. Aurangzeb contented himself with earthen or copper vessels. The copper utensils used in the royal kitchens were treated with tin every fortnight, whereas those for the princes were only done once a month.

Hindus called their kitchen *chauka*, habitually rubbed over with cow-dung, was reserved for cooking meals and none was allowed to enter with shoes on. Cooking was never entrusted to anybody except a high-caste Brahman or to a member of the middle class.

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84 Ibid.
88 Mandelslo, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
92 Ibid.
of their own caste. They took care to confine themselves to home-made dishes and abstained as far as possible from using any edible cooked in the market. They would prefer to go without meals than to accept a dish defiled by the touch of a low caste person or that of a non-Hindu. Hindus usually took two meals a day. Cleanliness was an important factor in Hindu’s kitchen.

The travellers did not fail to note that after their morning wash the Hindus would sit down on a piece of mat or fine cloth (in case of the rich) spread over ground rubbed over with cow-dung and mutter their prayer. Bathing was a requirement before meals.

In case of ordinary people, the leaves of the trees stitched together with rushes (patal) were placed before them to serve as plates. The diner rubbed the patal with a little salt and butter, over which were poured rice boiled without salt with some vegetables and curd. As soon as they had finished their meals, the leaves were removed and the ground rubbed afresh. In the case of rajas and other rich men the food was brought from the kitchen in bowls or vessels of silver or gold. They begin with taking rice of their choice and placed it in a large dish “adding some stew to it”. Next they partook of vegetables and other dishes according to taste and mixing a part of them with rice, ate them in small morsels. Table manners required not to use one’s left hand or to lick the fingers. Wives did not make it a custom to join their husbands at table, but took meals separately.

There was not so much importance attached to the formalities by the Muslims. Their kitchen and table manners were quite simple as they were free to cook and eat wherever and whatever they liked, except the flesh of swine.

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95 Ibid.
96 Ovington, op. cit., p 184.
98 Ovington, op. cit., p. 184.
100 Laval, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 377, Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 76.
105 Ibid, p. 42.
A *dastarkhwan* was spread on the floor and dishes arranged thereon. The whole family sat around and partook of the dishes jointly. The butler placed before each guest a round dish and a portion of food and covered it with fig or other leaves. No napkins were used and even the procedure of washing was not always adhered to. The more well-to-do among them used a superior embroidered silken *‘dastarkhwan’* with artificial flowers of gold and silver. They sometimes made use of spoons, though this was not the usual custom.

As water is a universal drink it is preferred primarily for drinking purpose in every age and clan. The importance of water for drinking was same during the sixteenth and the seventeenth century when we come across the contemporary travel accounts. Sometimes depending on the situation when there is a scarcity of drinking water its importance even increases manifolds. Caesar Frederick writes, “*There was not any want of Bread none of Wine: but the ...............without water they (wine) will kill a man.*”

There are references where the fondness of pure water is found by the king. The king of Vijayanagar drinks water brought from a spring in the covered and sealed vessels. The bania from Cambay did not drink any wine, nor use any vinegar but only water. While drinking water, the Hindus would not allow the vessel to touch their lips, but would pour water from its straight into their mouth from a distance. The custom was also observed by Portuguese and Christian Indians.

They use copper pots for drinking purposes. Gold and silver vessels were also used by the rich people for drinking water. The mughal emperor Akbar also quenches his thirst with ‘post’ or water. The main sources of drinking water were rivers. The Indians were very fond of drinking Ganga water. Baniyas carried Ganga water many hundred miles for drinking purposes as it was said to be pure and free.
from germs. "The Heathen Indians esteemed the water of the Ganges to be sacred. It is much lighter than other water and yet I have met with those who affirm that it causes Fluxes and that the Europeans boil it first."

The Mughal emperors were also fond of Ganga water. Besides rivers there were tanks for storing water for inhabitants who lived far from spring or rivers. Regarding the drinking water in India, Terry writes. "This ancient drinke of the world is the common drinke of India. It is more sweet and pleasant than ours, and in those hot countries agreeth better with mens bodies than any other liquor." On the other hand the drinking water of capital (Delhi) was impure and full of filth which caused fever and inflammation.

Wine drinking was common during the period under study. Drinking of wine was strictly prohibited among the people by the Mughal emperors but used commonly by the aristocratic class.

The most common and perhaps the cheapest drink was the Tari or juice of cocoanut, palm or date trees. Pleasant in taste and flavor, it was drunk with pleasure throughout India. Cocoa juice was the principal ingredient for the preparation of liquor which "drinks as deliciously as wine." Indians, particularly the Goanese, liked it much and drank it like water. It was very strong, especially after the third distillation.

Nira was another kind of wine drawn from arequier tree and was sweet like milk. Mahwa was another tree whose fruit yielded intoxicant liquor. Kherra and Bhadwar were famous for this particular wine which was considered unwholesome, unless boiled. Wine was prepared from refined sugar by a chemical
According to Ovington, a wine called “Jagre” was extracted from black sugar. Wines were also manufactured from rice and toddy. Some superior kinds of wines were imported from foreign countries like Portugal and Persia. Persian wine manufactured from grapes was smuggled into the Mughal dominions in spite of strict prohibition.

Tea and coffee were taken by quite a good number of people, especially those of the Coromandel Coast. Brahmans and Banias were particularly fond of it. Thevenot asserts that Banias and Brahmanas drank nothing but water. “wherein they put coffee and tea.” Ovington makes us believe that tea was taken by Banias without sugar or mixed with a small quantity of conserved lemons.

Della Valle tells us that many people in India used liquor called coffee which was made “from a black seed boiled in water which turned it almost into the same colour.” Tea and coffee were not taken as beverages but as intoxicants. Certain special vessels made of tin covered with cases and cloth wrappings were used to keep the tea hot. The rich and the nobles took delight in partaking of coffee with their friends. Hamilton was invited by the Nawab of Thatta to “take a dish of coffee” with him. There seem to have been coffee shops, if not coffee-houses, in some of our principal cities, like Delhi and Ahmedabad.

Dress and Ornaments

Dress occupies an important position in the society by identifying a culture, religion and even a country. The famous British poet and playwright, William Shakespear (1564-1616) writes: ‘The apparel oft proclaims the man’. Clothing is one of the basic necessities of every human being which distinguishes him from animals.

133 Ovington, op. cit., p. 142.
134 Ibid.
136 Thevenot, op. cit., p. 81.
All the foreigners who visited India during the period under study or even before and after the concerned period never failed to notice the dressing of the people of every section for the reason of their sights being unfamiliar to them and their readers. There was a variety in the dressing of Medieval Indian society that impressed the foreigners who came to visit India.

The native dress of Surat attracted the early sixteenth century Italian traveler, Pietro Della Valle to such an extent that he cannot escape writing, ‘I was so taken with the simplicity and grace of this Indian dress, which looked excellent on a horseman with scimeter girt on, buckler hanging at the shoulder belt, and a curiously-shaped, short and broad dagger tied with tasseled cords to the belt, that I had a complete outfit made for me to take back to Italy.’

Broadly, clothing is affected by the climatic conditions, economic means and social customs. The major part of India is mostly hot throughout the year except for some hilly places. There was no use of wollen in South India. To suit India’s climate, dresses were made of light stuffs. In the winter season, shirts and coats with sleeves and long coats (qabas) were used. Shawls too were draped around the shoulders during the winters. These were obtained from Kashmir and were very costly sometimes as much as hundred and fifty rupees each.

Dresses occupied fairly a prominent place in the life of the royalty. From the accounts of the early sixteenth century travellers we find the glimpses of the clothes worn by the Hindu kings of South India. Paes remarks, “The King was clothed in certain white cloths embroidered with many roses in gold, and with a pateca of diamonds on his neck of very great value”. The Royalty never wore any apparel more than once. So were the Mughal emperor Humayun and Akbar who generally changed their dresses daily to match with the colour of the planet of the day. Father Monserrate writes about the dress of Akbar: “His Majesty wore clothes of silk

141 A Forgotten Empire, op. cit., p. 254.
142 Tavernier, op. cit., Vol I, p. 132.
143 Bernier, op. cit., p. 403, Thevenot, op. cit., p. 52.
144 A Forgotten Empire, op. cit., p. 243.
beautifully embroidered in gold. His Majesty’s cloak comes down to his knee and his boots cover his ankles completely and (he) wears pearls and gold jewellery.147

The dress of Hindu nobles and sardars was slightly different. They used three pieces to cover their bodies, “one round the loins, the other for the head and the third on the shoulders.”148 These were made of “Velvet, Satten, Damaske, Scarlet, or white Bumbast cloth”.149 This was the common dress for well to-do Hindu families. But the Hindu rulers appear to have used a dress similar to that of Muslim nobles.

The dress of the ladies of the Hindu nobles and sardars was very costly and varied according to their status. According to Barbosa they wore white garments of very thin cotton or silk of bright colours, five yards long, one part of which was girt round below and the other part thrown over one shoulder and across their breasts.150 Describing the dress of these ladies Pietro Della Valle says that these women were clothed with figured silk from the girdle downwards and used a scrap of very pure linen over their shoulders.151

On ceremonial occasions the ladies sometimes also used a head dress. Paes, who was an eye witness to the celebration of Mahanavmi festival at Vijayanagar, writes about the ladies who participated in the function. “They have very rich and fine silk cloths; on the head they wear high caps which they call collaex, and on these caps they wear flowers made of large pearls; collars on the neck with jewels of gold very richly set with many emeralds and diamonds and rubies and pearls; and besides this many strings of pearls, and others for shoulder belts; on the lower part of the arms many bracelets, with half of the upper arm all bare, having armlets in the same way all of precious stones; on the waist many girdle of gold and of precious stones, which girdle hang in order one below the other, almost as far drawn as half the thing; besides these belts they have other jewels, and many strings of pearls round the ankles, for they wear very rich anklets even of greater value than the rest”.152

147 Monserrate, op. cit., p. 198.
149 Mahalingam, T. V., Administration and Social Life under the Vijayanagar, University of Madras, Madras, 1975, Part II, p. 61.
150 Barbosa, op. cit., Vol I, p. 207.
152 A Forgotten Empire, op. cit., p. 263. These ornaments could still be seen on the body of the ladies, although now made of silver, glasses, stones and other materials.
The use of shoes by the women of nobles and other higher class was also common. According to Nicolo Di Conti, “In some places the women have shoes made of thin leather ornamented with gold and silk”.

The women-slaves appointed on lower posts than maids, attired in costly silken garments. Principal women servants at the court were found clad in valuable garments. Thus, though they were inferior servants, they had no problem in procuring rich and abundant clothes to wear. Even the damsels kept clothes in a large number. Eunuchs in the houses of the nobles could have as fine clothes as their masters had. Thomas Roe saw the attendants in the train of an ambassador wearing costly and rich clothes.

Some of the nobles did not provide new clothes, or better one, to their household servants. They paid them against their services in worn out clothes. Slaves were kept by the Portuguese in Goa to serve them inside and outside of the houses. Contradictory descriptions are given by the contemporary writers about their dresses. Linschoten had written that because of excessive heat the masters (i.e., Portuguese) and their male and female attendants used linen dresses which they could change every day. Contrary to this Della Valle saw the servants and slaves at Goa very ill clad. Careri made no different description about the clothing of slaves and servants under the Portuguese of Goa.

Slaves at Surat used clothes of white linen, “which though fine is bought very cheap”. Though most of the household servants got rupees three in a month as their remunerations, but they could wear white linen and had sufficient quantity of food. Here we may infer that most of the times slaves and servants in the service of rich persons could have clothes in a satisfactory manner and exception might have been there, noted by Pelsaert.

Common people in Malabar went quite naked, only using a cloth to cover private parts of their body. Even the King’s clothing was found very brief. They could
be distinguished from the common man by the ornaments of precious metals. Manucci has set forth in detail the dresses of labourers, soldiers and other ordinary men and women in general. The men's clothing were comprised of a cloth to bind around their head, a string round their middle to which they attached a fragment piece of cloth about the size of a napkin to cover the middle part of the body like a "langer.

Besides, a sheet like cloth was used to cover the body, which served in the night as a bed-sheet. Sometimes, a pillow was also in their use. Most of men, except covering their private parts, remained naked and free to go everywhere. Women used a cloth of red or white cotton binding on their girdle like a petticoat. Another cloth was pak or *panjam* to put on head and shoulders and just to bind round the waist, was in common use.

Another reference about the dresses of common people is found in the pages of Thevenot. He wrote that shirts partly open or open from top to bottom were in use among all men. These shirts resembled with Persian *qabas* or gown like dresses. A kind of coat *arcaluck* (*arqaliq*) was put on. Those who could not afford warm garments, they made jacket stuffed of cotton. *Qabas* was generally made of cool cloth which was easy to maintain. Moors (Muslims) distinguished themselves putting a *coif* or head attire. Breeches or *shalwar* were also used. Those who wore ordinary means could wear clothes of cotton, but those who wanted to give an impression of richness wore silk. The rich persons rarely used white cotton Preferred silk. It makes obvious that white cotton was common among poor common people. During the last years of the sixteenth century, Brahmans found almost naked just using a small cloth bound round their waist. The English pioneer Fitch saw in Golconda both men and women putting on a little cloth. Banaras too, the people wore a small cloth round their middle keeping other parts of the body naked. They wore quilted caps and quilted gown in winter. Though *Bangla* produced a huge quantity of silk and cotton goods, but the inhabitants had no interest in using more clothes than necessary; that was a small piece round their waist.

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167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid., pp. 50.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid. pp. 50-51.
173 *Early Travels in India, op. cit.* p. 16.
rich people lived in the same manner.\textsuperscript{173} In the early years of seventeenth century nothing did change in respect of clothing of poor masses. The inhabitants of Sind could keep horses, camels and weapons, but were not interested in having clothed in abundance.\textsuperscript{174} Kashmiris could not afford cotton clothes which were quite dear in Kashmir. But their clothing consisted of woolen gowns and clouts, though poverty prevents them to change garments frequently.\textsuperscript{175}

Rich and poor in Calicut went around naked, only wearing silk and cotton cloth in the middle.\textsuperscript{176} This indicates the capability of rich persons to use the silken garments, but due to the climatic conditions they might have avoided them. In South India, even Kings and princes did not wear much clothes or preferred cotton clothes than silks,\textsuperscript{177} which was due to the excessive heat in the region.\textsuperscript{178}

In Gujarat also cotton, coarse and fine, was used depending on the income of a man. A long drawer and a head dress – white and clean, was in popular usage in both communities.\textsuperscript{179} Poor Oriya ladies contended themselves with a lungée, or a white cloth made fast about their waist.\textsuperscript{180} The banjara women wore white or painted piece of calico from their waist downwards.\textsuperscript{181}

The diamond miners of Golconda were forced to wear a little cloth only to conceal their private parts when they digged out diamonds, so that they could not steal the precious stones.\textsuperscript{182} At Masulipatam, though the boatmen used gold rings in their ears, but their dresses were confined to nothing but a clout girt about the middle with a sash.\textsuperscript{183}

Hindus and Muslims wore dresses alike during the epoch of this study with a little difference. Most of them lived naked. The same situation is not only told by the seventeenth century travellers but also in \textit{Ain-i-Akbari} that men and women in Bengal

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Early Travels in India}, op. cit., p. 218.
\textsuperscript{175} Pelsaert, op. cit., pp. 34-35.
\textsuperscript{176} Della Valle, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, p. 360.
\textsuperscript{177} Pietro’s Pilgrimage, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 281.
\textsuperscript{179} \textit{European Travellers under the Mughals}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{181} Tavernier, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{183} Fryer, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. 1, p. 172.
lived contented with a small quantity of clothes.\textsuperscript{184} The common dress of the Hindu was \textit{dhoti} and a loin cloth. The Muslims usually appeared to have worn \textit{payjama} (ijar) an ordinary shirt and a cap. Stockings were rarely used but the turban was common among all communities.\textsuperscript{185} Hindu ladies could be distinguished from Muslim ladies by wearing \textit{ghaghra}, \textit{lahnga} and \textit{choli} with \textit{dupatta}. Muslim ladies liked breeches (\textit{shalwars}) and shirts.\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Sari} and blouse was generally worn by Indian ladies.\textsuperscript{187} In Bengal ladies could only wear coarse loin cloth and \textit{sari}, but in Orissa even coarse cloth was not available to them.\textsuperscript{188} A short jacket and blouse was also in vogue among poor and rich ladies alike.\textsuperscript{189}

Stockings and gloves were avoided because of severe heat.\textsuperscript{190} While the rich ones could wear shoes, poor did move without them.\textsuperscript{191}

Indian women are always known for their fondness for ornaments. There was no departure from the traditional custom during the Mughal period.\textsuperscript{192} All the travellers agree and this is confirmed by our experience, that ornaments were “the very joy of their hearts.”\textsuperscript{193} They would deny themselves other necessities but would not forgo ornaments. Ornaments had to be totally abandoned when a woman unfortunately became a widow.\textsuperscript{194}

Ladies were accustomed to the use of ornaments from their very childhood. The ears of both sexes and noses of girls only were pierced through at a very tender age. Ornaments of gold, silver or brass, according to the means of the parents, were thrust through the pierced holes which grew wider and wider with age.\textsuperscript{195} Every child was adorned with a silver or gold chain with bells tied round the waist and anklets round the legs.

Ladies bedecked every limb of their bodies from head to foot with different types of ornaments. Abul Fazl enumerates 37 in his list in the Ain. Of the 5 ornaments

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[184]{\textit{Ain}, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 122.}
\footnotetext[185]{\textit{Ibid}, 27-31.}
\footnotetext[186]{\textit{Ibid}, op. cit., p. 53.}
\footnotetext[188]{\textit{Ibid}, op. cit., p. 53.}
\footnotetext[191]{\textit{Ibid}, op cit., p. 188.}
\footnotetext[192]{\textit{Ibid}, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 40.}
\footnotetext[193]{\textit{Ibid}, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 40.}
\footnotetext[194]{\textit{Early Travels in India}, op. cit., p. 323.}
\end{footnotes}
allotted to the head, Clauk called Sisphul by Abul Fazl was raised bell-shaped piece of gold or silver, hollow, and embellished from inside with attachments fastened to the hair over the crown of the head.196

Pendants were often worn in the ears. Usually made of gold, silver or copper they hung down from the ears almost touching the shoulders.197 Karnphul (shaped like the flower of Magreha), Pipal-Patti (crescent shaped), Mor Bhanwar (shaped like a peacock), Bali (a circlet) were the different forms of ear-rings. Usually one big and several smaller rings were worn on each ear.198 Manucci writes, "There hangs down from the middle of their head in the centre of their forehead a bunch of pearls or precious ornaments of the shape of star, sun or moon or flower beset with glittering jewels."199 Mang Tika was worn on the parting of the hair to add to its beauty. Binduli was another ornament meant for the forehead.

Nose ornaments were unknown in India up to the early medieval period. After the arrival of Muslims in India, it soon became the fashion to put on gold rings ornamented with gems, called Nath.200 The more fashionable ones used a gold or silver nose-pin201, of the shape of laung or a flower-bud.

Around the neck were worn necklaces of gold, pearls and other precious stones which contained five to seven strings of gold beads. Another form of necklace called Har was a string of pearls interconnected by golden roses which came down almost to the stomach. Its centre contained a pendant made of diamonds or other precious stones.202 Gulband consisted of a five or seven rose-shaped buttons of gold strung on to silk and worn round the neck.203

The upper part of the arms above the elbows were ornamented by armlets, called Bazuband, usually two inches wide, inlaid with jewels, diamonds, etc., with a bunch of pearls hung down.204 They decorated their wrist up to the elbow with

197 Ovington, op. cit., p. 188.
199 Manucci, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 339-40, Ovington, op. cit., p. 188.
200 Thevenot, op. cit., p. 37, Mandelslo, op. cit., p. 50.
bracelets called *churis*, usually 10 or 12 in number on each arm. They covered their fingers with rings, usually one for each; the rich studded them with diamonds and sapphires. One of these put on the right thumb was fitted with a looking glass, called *arsi*.

*Payal* was commonly used for beautifying legs which produced jingling sound when its wearer moved about. *Ghunghru* consisting of small golden bells usually six on each ankle and strung upon silk were worn between the *Tehar* and *Khal Khal*. *Bhanj* and *Bichhwah* were the ornaments used for the in step. *Anwat* was the ornament to decorate the big toe.

Men also wore ornaments during the period under study. Muslims were usually against it except that some of them put on amulets. Hindus on the other hand adorned themselves with ear and finger rings.

Economic disparity played an important role in deciding the metal used for ornament by the people. Rich used ornaments made of gold, silver and precious stones. Common people contended themselves with less costly metals or substances. Abul Fazl says ornaments were also made of a special kind of stone found near Rajgarh in Bihar. Elephants’ teeth or *ivory* was much used in India. Women wore arm bracelets made of ivory especially in Rajasthan and Cambay. Pearl was used by the Bengali women in the preparation of bracelets. Cloves and other cheap metals were also used by the village people. Ornaments made of rhinoceros’ horn were much esteemed in Bengal. Peter Mundy remarks, “*Of this horns (rhinoceros) they make Cups, rings and Churees (churi, bracelet), Circle or small loopes, which weomen weare on their wrists, they being of great esteem.*”

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Housing

The foreign travellers of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century had given a very good description of housing wherever they went in India. Although they went to different places at different periods of time but one thing they commonly observed that there was a vast difference in the housing system of rich and the poor’s which was obvious from the structure of the houses and the materials used in building a house. Some regional variations are discernible in spite of the fact that certain basic features of houses of the rich, ordinary and poor remained more or less common.

Father Monserrate provides us a general description of the houses of rich and the poor in Mughal towns, as follows. The houses of the rich had “ornamental gardens in their courtyards and tanks and fish-ponds which are lined with tiles of various colours”, artificial springs and foundations and pathways “paved with brickwork or marble”. They adorned their roofs and arched ceilings with carvings and paintings. Windows were not provided for, “an account of the filth of the streets”. Moreover, “such houses show nothing in their façade or entrances could attract the passerby, concealing entirely what lay inside”. He adds that the Hindus (“Brahmanae”) had another style of architecture but does not elaborate upon it and simply says that they decorated their houses with stone and wooden statues and sculptures of their deities and fabulous creatures. As for the common people, he merely says that they “lived in lowly huts and cottages.”

The major description of Mughal towns such as Agra, Delhi, Lahore and Surat given by other European travellers largely match and supplement these accounts.

There was a class of affluent persons but they did pose themselves to be very poor. There were some rich merchants on the coast of Gingalee who concealed their wealth because they feared the plunder of their wealth by the invaders and confiscation of property and goods by the governor. Merchants and shopkeepers of Surat lived in huts and small houses as they did not want to display their riches for

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216 Bowrey, op. cit., p. 127.
fear of theft or exaction by the government officers. Hindu of Golconda also concealed their wealth for fear of its being heavily taxed by the local authorities.

The aristocracy, in general, tried to imitate, as far as possible, the patterns of the royal palaces, while constructing their own mansions. The royal palaces were, indeed, lofty and magnificent structures with numerous apartments set apart for different purpose, e.g., drawing rooms, dressing rooms, bath rooms, retiring rooms opening into enclosed court yards, the female apartments called the ‘Harem’, etc. All the walls were well-ornamented with different kinds of precious stones, fine painting and various other devices. Bernier speaks about the Royal Palace at Delhi thus. “The citadel, which contains the Mehalle or Seraglio, and the other royal apartments….. is round or rather semi-circle….. The walls of the citadel, as to….their antique and round towers, resemble those of the city, but being partly of brick, and partly of red stone which resembles marble, they have a better appearance. The walls of the fortress likewise excel those of the town in height, strength and thickness…Except on the side of the river, the citadel is defended by a deep ditch faced with hewn stone, filled with water, and stocked with fish…..”

Bernier’s description of the Royal palace at Agra is even more lifelike when he writes, “The King’s palace is in the Castle. It contains three Courts adorned all round with Porches and Galleries that are painted and Gilt, nay there are some places covered with plates of Gold. Under the Galleries of the first Court, there are Lodgings made for the King’s Guards. The Officers Lodgings are in the second; and in the third the stately apartments of the King and his Ladies: from whence he goes commonly to a lovely Divan which looks to the River….The Palace is accompanied with five and twenty of thirty other very large ones, all in line, which belong to the Princes and other great Lords of the Court.”

Elaborate lighting arrangements had been made, in these palaces, with the help of wax-candles, torches, oil-lamps etc.  

222 Thevenot, *op. cit.*, p. 47.  
The nobles lived in very big and spacious houses with numerous apartments and amenities, e.g., drawing rooms, guest rooms, female’s quarters, bath, water tanks, spacious courtyards and handsome subterranean rooms, furnished with big fans, which served as suitable places for taking rest during the summer. Pelsaert mention these houses as ‘noble and pleasant with many apartments’.224 A good house had also terraces on which the family might sleep during the night.225 Some of the houses had ‘khaskhanas’ meant for retreat during the hot weather, and were also furnished with ‘hammans’ of cold and hot water. There were also windows (khidkis) for fresh air and light.226 Houses were well plastered and were white washed, from time to time, with lime mixed with gum, milk and sugar.227 The houses of the upper classes were also well-decorated with different kinds of furniture, ornamented cots and bedsteads, cushions, mattresses with fine embroidered coverings nicely carpeted floors, etc.228

The noble’s houses last only for few years because the walls are built with mud instead of mortar. The white plaster of the walls is built with mud instead of mortar. The white plaster of the walls he regarded as very noteworthy, and far superior to anything in Holland.229 They used unslaked lime, mixed with milk, gum, and sugar into a thin paste. When walls had been plastered with lime, they applied this paste, rubbing it with well-designed trowels until it became smooth, then they polished it steadily with agates, perhaps for a whole day until it became dry and hard and shone like alabaster, to be even used as a looking glass.230

The lower strata consisting of common troopers and all that vast multitude of servants and camp followers lived in houses interspersed with those of the nobility and the rich constituting an immense number of small ones (house) built of mud and thatched with straw.231 They all had thatched roofs “supported by a layer of long, handsome and strong canes: and the clay walls are plastered with a fine white lime.” Bernier says further, “Very few are built entirely of brick or stone and several are

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228 Ibid.
229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
231 Bernier, op. cit., pp. 245-6. That the wealthy also had thatched roofs for their houses is borne out by the fact that Badauni in Patna in 1571 came across thatched houses, with wood facing constructed at the cost of Rs 30 to 40 thousand.
made only of clay and straw, yet they are airy and pleasant, most of them having courts and garden.”

Finch (1611) reports that the houses of nobles and merchants at Agra were built of stone and bricks and had flat roofs while those of the poor were of mud walls covered by thatch that often caused terrible fires.’ But he also mentions carved windows and doors in houses at Lahore that were fair and high. Describing houses in Lahore Finch remarks that in most of the houses of “Gentiles” (Hindus) the doors were placed high, six or seven steps above the ground, “so built for more securities and that passengers should not see into their houses.” Niccolao Manucci, notices in Lahore buildings as lofty as some having eight stories, which seems rather improbable, though Manucci lived at Lahore for some years.

The house built by Hakim Ali was considered a wonder of the time. It was built beneath the reservoir. The house had bedrooms and rooms for other utilities. Emperor Akbar himself visited the house and for that he along with the Hakim dived into the reservoir to reach the house. After reaching there he changed his clothes, applied perfumes, ate breakfast, read some books and rested for a while. For coming out the house he again put on the lion-sheet (lung) and come out of the reservoir. We have first-hand information from Manrique of the palace like house of Asaf Khan. He writes that on his arrival of the gate of the place of Asaf Khan he was taken into ‘a small squire or courtyard, just then occupied by various men at arms’. ‘We passed through them to a second door, by which we entered into a lovely and pleasant garden……watered by sweet, clear water brought by numerous open channels communicating with various reservoirs and fountains. Of these some made attractive bathing-places, being enclosed in gilded and painted houses. Though these were Maumetan baths the principal bath had the walls painted with scenes from the life of that true precursor of Christ in the solitary and wild desert and in the penitential Palace, where, clothed in camel hair and fed on locusts and wild honey, he was preparing himself to baptize the Messiah…..’ He adds that from this place he was escorted to the lower palaces built in the centre of this lovely garden and from there

232 Ibid.
233 Early Travels in India, op. cit., p. 185.
he was led to a ‘curious building, well lighted and extremely attractive, as it was
lighted all around by a series of casements fitted with the windows of glass of
different colours, secondly because, wherever there was no window, it was replaced
by an ornament of different kinds of branches and flowers enchased on the walls in
glittering silver, which thus served as a fixed hanging’. The floor of this building was
entirely covered with rich and gaily coloured carpets, the bare floor being held
unworthy to support the rich portable bedstead which stood in the centre, otherwise
than upon such a covering. This bedstead was made entirely of the finest kind and
most brilliant colours, which, besides adding to its value, made it most attractive in
appearance. 236

The houses of poor in India were made of mud with low thatched roofs,
walled up from all sides, with one single door, without brick flooring or any furniture.
They were of same design and shape, and in appearance very cheerless and in rainy
season most uncomfortable. But these accounts are superfluous, lacking in deep
knowledge of climatic conditions and social conditions.

Fitch writes that the houses in Patna were built of earth and covered with
straw. 237 Houses in Sonargaon were almost same as in other parts of India. 238
Linschoten found the lodging of poor persons very small and low with the topping of
straw. 239 Though the country of Masulipatam was good and fruitful, all houses were
made of thatched roofs. 240 At Thatta the houses of the common people differed from
other parts of the country. Hence the common people could use mortar also in place of
mud. 241 The houses in the villages adjacent to Burhanpur were in no way better than
other places. At Ajmer alongwith the mud houses, there were tent houses too in which
the royal camp followers used to live. 242 Even the lodging of rich persons at Surat,
had huts of canes and mats on the top of terraces, to be used in summers. The servants
quarters nearby the houses of the nobles, were made of mud and straw. At Agra, the
houses of the poors were in no better condition, and were same as in other parts of the

237 Early Travels in India, op. cit., p. 23.
238 Ibid, p. 28.
240 Early Travels in India, op. cit., p. 16.
242 Purchas, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 443.
country.\(^{243}\) Terry show the houses of the poors made of straw, thatch and mud.\(^{244}\) Peter Mundy, who visited the western coast of India (1608-67), came across the houses of the common masses being very small thatched and on floors having a wash of cow dung.\(^{245}\) Pelsaert ascertained the conditions of the dwellings of common people in the same condition. But in Kashmir he observed the houses of the poors made of pine wood 'the interstices filled with clay', which gave an elegant look and were well ventilated.\(^{246}\) Though the bazars of Calicut were full of all necessities of life, the houses were all made of mud and thatches of palm.\(^{247}\)

These houses of the poors remained in the same condition without changes made by the succeeding generation. Bernier could see no change in the dwellings of the poor strata. These were 'small ones, built of mud, thatched with straw'. But the thing which amazed him was that the rich persons also constructed huts to be used in summers made of 'Kas-Kanyas' or Khas.\(^{248}\) About the houses of the persons of low means, Thevnot has also given a similar description as contained in the accounts of the other travellers who visited the country during the seventeenth century. Manucci found the poverty-stricken, humble people living in the huts. Having no furniture and floors used for both sitting and sleeping. Their huts were constructed of earth and pieces of wood bound together with ropes, without much regard to appearance. These wooden posts serve as supporting pillars, and the roof is of thatch.\(^{249}\) Ovington observed nothing new as far as the huts and dwellings, of meaner sorts were concerned, bamboo and reeds being the chief building material of the poor. Streynsham Master\(^{250}\) could not see anything different and almost same situation prevailed in Bengal at Masulipatam when he visited these regions. What Hamilton and Careri ascertained was not a novel thing. All these travellers saw the dwellings of the poors made of bamboo, straw, mud or thatches etc.

But Norris speaks in a rather different way. The ambassador writes that though

\(^{244}\) European Travellers under the Mughals, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
\(^{246}\) Pelsaert, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
\(^{248}\) Bernier, *op. cit.*, pp. 227, 246-47.
the plains here are very fertile, even then the house and outer walls of the villages are of mud, but 'strong enough to withstand any assault.' In the last days of Aurangzeb's reign, the soldiers were forced to live in mud houses, or huts. Thatta, which was a well-populated town, where were 'fish and furniture in abundance, and incredibly cheap', also hens, sheep, sugar and rice were sold at highly cheap rates, even then all the houses were made of mud and supported by timber. Most of the ware houses of English factors were found made of thatch and mud.

So far as the furniture inside the houses of the poor strata is concerned, the general notion found in the contemporary accounts is that their houses contained a little furniture or sometimes none. Just a few earthen wares to hold water and to cook in, were kept by the poor persons. Most of these houses contained only two beds, one for man and another for his wife. Otherwise the floor was used for sitting both. Manucci had described in detail and condition of the houses of the common people. About the houses of the Hindus he wrote that they had no furniture and used to live on the floors of pounded earth, plastered with a wash of cow-dung. Bedsteads were very common among all classes-rich and poor alike. These bedsteads were made of bamboo and cords. Portable beds made of canes, but quite strong, were also in vogue. Fans were used by the poor persons made of leaves of palm and coconut trees.

Important building materials used by the common people were of mud, branches and leaves of the trees, bamboo, canes, and grasses of different types. Reeds were mainly used in Orissa to build houses and huts. In Bengal and at Ajmer also, bamboo served as the chief building material. Manucci and Tavernier observed houses at Patna made of palm-leaves, thatch, but Abul Fazl wrote much earlier that the houses in Patna, for the most part, were roofed with tiles. In Gujrat mostly the

252 Ibid, p. 255.
254 Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 61.
256 Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 61, Mandelslo, op. cit., p. 27.
257 Careri, op. cit., p. 168.
258 Bernier, op. cit., p. 353.
262 Tavernier, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 86, 100
263 Ain. op. cit., Vol II, p. 164.
houses were made of burnt bricks, tiles and some of them even having stone foundations.\textsuperscript{264}

*Kashmiris* made their houses of wood, which gave an elegant look. Branches of Palm-trees and bamboos were utilized by the Malabaris to construct their dwellings.\textsuperscript{265} In south India coconut wood was commonly used for making houses which was easily available in coastal regions.\textsuperscript{266} Lower classes in Sind made their houses of poles and covered them with a mixture of straw and mud. Gentiles, or Hindus, were fond of keeping a wash of cow-dung on the floor of their houses. Della Valle described in a somewhat detailed manner the custom of using cow-dung for beautifying the floors of the houses. Out of these descriptions one may infer that the houses made by the common people were of same design and shape during the seventeenth century.

Geographical conditions, economic condition and building materials available are the three important factor on which the building activities depends.

While studying the conditions of housing of the lower strata in the different parts of the Mughal Empire, or out of it, during the seventeenth century, it seems that all of the above mentioned factors are reflected in their building activities. The poor or common people used to make houses according to the climatic conditions by utilizing the material which was easily available to them. India being a tropical country, the dwellings were constructed to get protection from the excessive heat during most of the months of the year. No doubt, during the rainy season or winters they faced hardships but in South India during winter season too, the days are always quite warm, but in extreme north of the country the season comes with bitter cold. The factors that effected the construction of houses, the common masses are as follows:-

Those who lived in coastal areas had all kinds of benefit of palm trees. They made it useful for making the thatch, for roofing their huts and houses, and made out of it wine, oil cords etc. Thus, they could save several expenses.\textsuperscript{267}

Abul Fazl wrote that houses of bamboos covered with palm-tree were quite durable.\textsuperscript{268} This factor may account for the thatched houses preferred by common and poor persons. Della Valle also corroborated the evidences of Abul Fazl that bamboo

\textsuperscript{264} Ibid. Vol. II, p. 256.
\textsuperscript{265} Thévenot, *op. cit.*, p. 100
\textsuperscript{267} *Early Travels in India, op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.
\textsuperscript{268} *Ain, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 134.
houses in Bengal lasted for a long.

Houses having earthen walls, mingled with straw, stood very firm. In case of catching fire, these houses 'could be rebuilt quickly.'\textsuperscript{269} Thomas Roe also noted that these houses could be built very easily and in a short period.\textsuperscript{270}

The houses in Kashmir, made of wood not only gave a nice look but also seemed like that of the houses of upper strata.\textsuperscript{271}

Houses made of reeds and canes etc. were most suitable for the hot climate of India. Because of this reason even some of the rich persons also constructed apartments of \textit{khas} to get relaxed from severe heat of the summers.\textsuperscript{272} Sometimes they also got constructed houses of canes and mates on the top of their building, which could be kept cool by sprinkling water in on them.

Cow-dung which was spreaded like a wash over the floors of the homes, meant not only for elegancy and ornamentation, but it was also a cheap remedy against plague.\textsuperscript{273} Linschoten, \textit{"Their houses are commonly straven with Cowe dung, which (they say) killeth Fleas.\"}\textsuperscript{274}

On the seaports, sometimes, the thatched houses were made temporarily when the ships loaded or unloaded there. Otherwise the huts were burnt and the inhabitants returned to their own houses.\textsuperscript{275}

Though the \textit{bazars} of Surat and Thatta were full of all kinds of provisions, which were sold there at cheap rates, even then the houses were built of mud and thatches.\textsuperscript{276} This makes obvious that people having food grains on cheap rates, could save money to spend in better housing.

Thus, the common sorts of people did not spend much on the construction of their houses, but utilized what was easily available to them. These houses could be rebuilt or repaired easily. Hence these people can save money to spend on other necessities of life.

\textsuperscript{269} \textit{European Travellers under the Mughals, op. cit.,} p. 90.
\textsuperscript{270} Purchas, \textit{op. cit.,} Vol. IV, pp. 440.
\textsuperscript{271} Pelsaert, \textit{op. cit.,} p. 34.
\textsuperscript{272} Bernier, \textit{op. cit.,} p. 247.
\textsuperscript{273} Purchas, \textit{op. cit.,} Vol. IV, p. 440.
\textsuperscript{275} Thevenot, \textit{op. cit.,} p. 27.
\textsuperscript{276} \textit{English Factories, op. cit.,} Vol. 5 (1634-36), p. 124.
Superstitions and Beliefs

Superstitions are a commonly witnessed phenomenon. They can be seen anywhere, anytime, whether at home, in office or on the way. People of every caste, creed or community are superstitious. Though the forms of superstition may vary, their presence can be felt in every society.

A superstition is a universal phenomenon. Even the people of highly rational West are superstitious. It is an integral part of human society. Superstitions have been prevalent in society since time immemorial. They have their origin in illiteracy, i.e. lack of rational belief, scientific attitude and also lack of faculty to interpret certain events. Its origin can be traced back to prehistoric times when people did not have knowledge and exposure as we do have today.

Superstitions and beliefs were very common in India during the period under study as it is today and it was very well pictured by the foreign travellers of the period. Basically, India is a religion based nation since the ancient times and had a very rich cultural past with the ancient civilization in the world. It is very much obvious that culture give rise to certain customs, manners and ceremonies which on the other hand give rise to superstitions and beliefs.

The foreign travel accounts of the 16th and 17th century presents many observations regarding myths, superstition, custom and beliefs of the people. Such superstitions and beliefs with slight variations seem to be commonly popular among the Hindu and Muslim sections of society. Though, illiteracy can be assigned as one of the reasons for these social dogmas among the common peoples but even the literate and the rulers are highlighted by the foreign travellers account following the superstitions and beliefs of the time. The Persians chronicles corroborates the picture given by the foreigners which strengthen the fact.

Hindus seemed to be more superstitious as compared to the Muslims. About Hindus, Manucci writes, "...their religion is nothing but a confused mixture of absurdities and coarse imaginings, unworthy even of the rational man, much less has it the least trace of Divinity as its author". Superstitious beliefs are universally
held, but they seem more current among Hindus than among any other group. François Martin (a late seventeenth century traveller) relates a story of withering crop because of lack of rains and the harvest was only saved by their firm belief in superstition.

The superstitions followed by the Hindus at the eclipse day were performed with the help of Brahman, with full enthusiasm. This was a great source of profit to the Brahmans on account of the offerings they extracted from poor and ignorant people, persuading them that the Sun and moon were fighting against each other, and that there would not be peace between these luminaries until vast offerings had been made to them.

Different kinds of religious acts were performed, especially at the banks of the holy rivers. Tavernier writes, “It was a wonderful sight to watch the multitude of people, men, women, and children, who came from all quarters to bathe in the Ganges. But they must begin this bathing three days before they see the eclipse, during which time they remain day and night on the banks of the river preparing all kinds of rice, milk, and sweetmeats to throw to the fishes and crocodiles. Immediately when the Brahmans give the word, and they know it is the fortunate hour, whichever kind of eclipse it may be, of the Sun or moon, the idolaters break all the earthen vessels used in their households, and leave not one piece whole- this causes a terrible noise in a town.” Their belief was by bathing in the river they will clean themselves of their sins. Regarding the same eclipse in 1666 Bernier writes, “The eclipse of 1666 is also indelibly imprinted on my memory by the ridiculous errors and strange superstitions of the Indians.”

The Mughal emperor also permitted these ancient and superstitious practices without disturbing the Hindus in the free exercise of their religion. Fryer writes about the belief of Muslims in the eclipse as, “the Moors are in a lamentable Plight,

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281 Bernier, op. cit., p. 301.
Another popular belief during the period that was prevalent among both Hindus as well in Muslims was in astrology. Astrologers played an important role in the court of the great Mughals. Sidi Reis mentions the importance of prophesy made by astrologers at Humayun’s court. The majority of Asiatics are so obsessed in favour of being guided by the signs of the heavens that no circumstances can happen below, which is not written above. In every enterprise they consult their astrologers. When two armies have completed every preparation for battle, no consideration can induce the generals to commence the engagement until the ‘Sahet’ be performed. In like manner no commanding officer is nominated, no marriage take place, and no journey is undertaken, without consulting Monsieur the Astrologer. Their advice is considered absolutely necessary even on the most trifling occasion; as the proposed purchase of a slave or the first wearing of new clothes.

Every quarter of the city had astrologers and astronomers. There is not a great man who has not in his house an astrologer. They prepared the horoscopes of sons of Maliks, nobles, Amirs, Vazirs and other high personnels. There were poor astrologers also who tell a person his fortune for a paisa and after examining the hand and face of the applicant, turning over the leaves of the large book, and pretending to make certain calculations, these imposters decide upon, the salient, or propitious moment of commencing the business, he may have in hand.

Careri reflected the same idea while saying the king undertakes nothing without the advice of his astrologers. Terry remarks, “And in men of that profession the king puts so much confidence that he will not undertake a journey, not yet do anything of the least consequence, unlesse his wizards tell him tis a good and prosperous houre.” These astrologers depended on the stars for their calculation

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286 Bernier, op. cit., pp. 243-44.
287 Careri, op. cit., p. 247.
288 Early Travels in India, op. cit., p.310.
and Jahangir had immense faith in them. These were generally Brahmins by caste, but they had influence on Muslims as well as on Hindu masses. Even a street walker astrologer could influence a general man by telling his fortune with ambitious replies. People even sought the help of astrologers and magicians for the recovery of stolen goods.

At Malabar in South India these astrologers belonged to a lower caste of Canaquas. Astrology was the means of their livelihood. Their importance can be felt when we learn that no King or Lord will undertake any business, nor go forth from his house without asking them the day and the hour on which he shall do it. As there was caste distinction in the Hindu society, they (astrologers) were not allowed to enter the Kings palace or the house of any person of good family. "They know well the Signs (of the Zodiac) and the Planets, and have everything drawn out in plans."

People had very strong belief in omens. The sight of an auspicious object was always interpreted as a happy presage for the fulfillment of desires such as the sight of a cow with her calf, a pitcher full of water, curd and fish were believed to be auspicious whereas a bad omen was responsible for evil. On the birth of Emperor Akbar, Hamida Banu says; "It was of very good omen that the birth was in a fixed sign, and astrologers said a child so born would be fortunate and long lived." (Plate-I)

Sneezing was always considered to be a bad omen, a sign which predict evil. Similarly the sight of a corpse, an empty pot, or crossing of path by a cat was inauspicious omens. Manucci writes, "These Hindus have many superstitions, of which should I begin to speak, I should occupy a very long time, and I should be wearisome. Among them it is the habit, when carrying water home, if they should encounter a corpse, to throw away the whole of that water, going back to refill the

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289 Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 77.
290 Ibid.
292 Canaquas is derived from a Sanskrit word ganika that means an astrologer which relates to profession rather than the caste.
294 Begum Gulbadan, Humayun Namah, Tr., Annette S. Beveridge, Low Price Publications, Delhi, (First Published, 1902, Third rpt. 1996), p. 158.
vessel. Coming out of the house if any one sneezes, or if a cat crosses in front of them, they turn back and relinquish the business for that day.”

In South India all Nayars who were considered as mighty warriors, believed in ghosts of many kinds; they have among them lucky and unlucky days; on the unlucky days they undertake nothing, and do nothing; they believe also in omens, that if a cat crosses in front of any person who is about to do any business, he does it not; or, if on coming forth from the house for any purpose they see a crow carrying a stick, they turn back; or if in saying farewell to other persons with whom they have been, some one of them sneezes, he who was going, sits down again and does not leave so soon.

Belief in magic, witchcraft and sorcery was very common during the period under study. Such superstitions and beliefs with slight variations seem to be commonly popular among the Hindu and Muslim sections of society. In Cochin, Goa and Bassein even some of the Christians having faith in Indian superstitions.

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