CHAPTER - III
CHAPTER-III

Cultural Life in the 16th and 17th Century by Foreign Travellers

India had a rich Hindu culture since ancient times. A new culture sprang up in India with the incorporation of Muslims during the medieval period which started shaping itself in a new milieu.

The Muslim culture was represented by the Mughal aristocracy; was a status symbol of the Mughal court and symbolised a culture that was magnificent and opulent. A display of cultural extravagance was a sign of higher social and political status for the nobles, who constantly desired proximity to the emperor. Mughal courtly culture was reflected in various forms; in the architecture of personal homes, in fashionable dressing, and in one’s conduct, manner and speech. Pastimes and recreational activities like hunting and gambling also reflected cultural life of the period. The enthusiastic involvement in the celebration of fairs and festivals by the royalty and the common people helped in the cultural assimilation.

Over a period of time, this courtly culture filtered down even to popular literature, art and architecture. Like the imperial court, aristocratic households too became not only political centres but also artistic, intellectual, and cultural centres. Without the extravagant lifestyle of the nobles, Mughal life and art would have been devoid of much of its richness.

Encouragement and patronage was provided to cultural and literary activities by the ruling class. The scholars, musicians and astrologers were encouraged. The nobles patronized art and culture by indulging in artistic pursuits, encouraging artists, poets and craftsmen as a part of cultural enterprise. These courtly ideals of arts and manners were, therefore, easily diffused even among the middle classes, affecting their customs, ideas, aspirations, tastes and pleasures.

Both the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries were marked by a heightened cultural activity due to the political stability and economic prosperity of the kingdom and the aesthetic taste and literary bent of mind of the Mughals that contributed greatly to the development of culture in India. The activities enhancing the cultural
development were also felt by the foreign travellers who visited India during the period.

**Pastimes and Recreation**

Pastimes and recreation is a wider term which includes a lot of social activities that helps to pass time pleasantly or for relaxing for sometimes like games and sports, singing and dancing etc. Such social activities help a lot in building social character and are integral part of social life.

The sixteenth and the seventeenth century had also seen the prevalence of various types of social activities in India. These activities find graphic descriptions in the accounts of the contemporary foreign travellers.

From the accounts of the foreign travellers regarding pastime and recreation is clear that these social activities were enjoyed alike by the emperor as well as by the commoners. The significant feature of the social activities of the period was that they had been greatly influenced by the military and adventurous characteristics of the age.\(^1\)

Therefore, some of the games like *chaughan* (polo), hunting (*shikar*), gladiatorial contests, combats were limited to the aristocratic class whereas, chess, chaupar, playing cards, pigeon-flying, kite-flying, wrestling, fencing etc. were accessible to the rich and the poor alike. These amusements were constituted by both the indoor and outdoor activities.

**Cards**

Playing cards appears to have been popular in India from the ancient times. It is evident from *Humayun Namah* of Gulbadan Begum that Emperor Humayun indulged in a game of cards at Kabul with his stepmother and sisters.\(^2\) The successors

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\(^1\) Ojha, Pran Nath, *North Indian Social Life During Mughal Period*, Oriental Publishers and Distributors, Delhi, 1975, p. 46.

of Akbar with the exception of Aurangzeb were very keenly interested in this game. Jahangir was intensely fond of it. Thomas Roe once saw Shahjahan playing cards earnestly.

The game was equally popular with the common people who displayed several trick at cards. Some foreign travellers like John Marshall, Mandelslo and Ovington refer to its popularity among the commoners as well.

**Chess**

The playing of chess was common during the period. It was a good indoor game and was the most aristocratic of all indoor games. Alberuni also mentions the name of this game with the length of some detail. During the Mughal period the king, the nobles and the commoners all took great delight in playing this game. Manucci refers to the keen interest of the aristocrats in this game, and he says that by playing chess they "learn to govern, place and displace, give and take, with discretion to the glory and gain of their projects." Abul Fazl also writes that it was most popular indoor game at that time for both high and low classes. Akbar is said to have played the game of living chess with slave girls as pieces moving on the chequered pavement of the *Pachisi* Court at Fatehpur Sikri.

**Music**

Music has ever been a source of entertainment and the art of music has been cultivated and patronised since ancient times. Various types of music were recorded

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4 Ojha, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
5 Mandelslo, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
as the favourite pastimes both for rural and urban peoples, from king down to the commoners.  

The aristocratic class was very fond of music during the period under study. Babur himself excelled in music and composed songs. He supplemented his wine parties with music. His son Humayun enjoyed a book and song with palatable food and flasks of wine. Besides Ram Das and many other great musicians, Tan Sen was also the product of Akbar’s reign. Manrique describes that among the different varieties of music; dhruapat chhui, chruva, bangula, qawl, chutkalari, taranah, lahchari, chhand, sadara, desakha were the most prominent. Similar accounts are also given in Ain.  

Among all the above accounts Ovington’s description is more graphic and reliable regarding commoner’s sources of entertainment. A delightful and sweet sounding rhythmical melody sung in chorus by the seamen busy with their oars would “keep up their spirit.” Young women of the countryside with pitchers on their heads would go to a well in the village early in the morning to fetch water. All the way to the well and back, they would sing in chorus, sometimes in batches of 20 or 30. The common people’s fondness for music and singing is also corroborated by the painting of the period. (Plate- II).

The rich and the nobles were good at music both instrumental and vocal. Jahangir and Shahjahan’s reign were remarkable for the progress of vocal and instrumental music. All the Mughal kings, with the solitary exception of Aurangzeb were great patron of music.  

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10 Mandelslo, op. cit. p. 310.  
12 Ibid. p. 388.  
13 Ibid.  
18 Mandelslo, op. cit. p. 23.
Dancing

Dancing known as _nautch_ during Mughal period was also a good pastime for the rich especially. All festive occasion were incomplete without dancing girls and this can be seen in a picture in *Humayun Nama*.

Dancing girl would play, sing and dance and entertain the guests. Female dancers and public women were available in big cities at reasonable rates. The patar and rope dancing were very popular. _Akhara_ was a special type of dance enjoyed by nobles. Aurangzeb was very strict and against dancing as Manucci writes, "he ordered public women and dancing girls either to marry or to "clear out of his realm.""

Theatrical Performance

Theatrical performances were also a source of recreation for the people during the period. Manucci refers to the Mughal family's fancy for the theatre when he writes, "the theatre dance, and music had their prescribed hours. Some actors from Gujarat performed a piece before Shahjahan showing the maladministration in that kingdom." He further records that educated men and women would sometimes relax themselves by reading light literature, short stories, novels, poetry etc. It was also customary to listen to stories of adventures, heroes and lovers before going to bed at night. Another common practice, especially among the rural folk, was to pass their idle hours in solving riddles put to them by their friends. This fact also finds a mention in Badaoni's work.

Hunting

Hunting of the wild animals and birds was the most absorbing and exciting sport during the sixteenth and the seventeenth century which is depicted in the travelogues. Travellers give very detailed description of the hunting expeditions.
undertaken by kings and courtiers. Different wild animals with diverse methods were hunted for this purpose. Emperor Akbar had invented a mode of hunting known as ‘qamargah’ which could be used in hunting almost all wild beasts. (Plate- III). In this method a kind of hunting circle was formed round the shikargah that reduces to a small compass. This method involves the participation of nobles, huntsmen and sometimes commoners also with different sorts of arms like arrows, short spikes, swords and musketoons.  

Lion hunting was exclusively reserved for the king and the royal princes. (Plate- IV). None could kill a tiger or a lion without a prior permission from the king. Lion or tiger hunting was the most exciting when hunted with bow and arrow or by a matchlock sitting on an elephant with uncovered howdah which was the adopted method by the Mughal emperors. There was a great risk in this method which is evident from the incidents Jahangir had to encounter.

Elephant hunting was also a royal game which also could not be indulged in without the special permission of the permission of the king. It was performed differently. “In some places they make Pit-falls for them (elephant), by means whereof they fall into some hole or pit, from whence they are easily got out, when they have once entangled them well.” Another common method used at that time was to use of a tame female to attract the male elephant. The methods of hunting of various other animals like leopards, nilgaus, boars, deers, antelopes, gazelles, buffaloes are also preserved in the travelogues and other contemporary sources of the time. The beasts like tigers, dogs, deers, buffaloes, and elephants were especially trained for hunting. (Plate- V).

\[21\] Ibid., p. 218
\[23\] Thevenot, Jean de. *Voyages De Mr. De Thevenot*, IIIrd Part ed. Surendranath Sen, Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri (Delhi; National Archives of India, 1949), p. 64.
\[24\] Ibid.
\[27\] Thevenot, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
For South India there is no such detailed description available in the travelogues. Only passing references are made by Varthema and Barbosa regarding the Vijayanagar Empire. Varthema noticed that the capital occupied the most beautiful site with certain very beautiful places for hunting and some for fowling, so that it appeared to him to be a second paradise. At Calicut, Varthema writes, "they are great hunters."

**Hawking**

Hawking formed an interesting pastime of the period as is evident in the travelogues which finds satisfactorily corroboration in the Persian chronicles. Besides many elaborate Mughal paintings are also available in which kings or princes are shown carrying hawks or falcons on their wrist that strength the fact. From the evidences found this game seems to be ubiquitous as equally entertaining in Europe and Persia also. The South Indian king Krishnadeva Ray seems to have maintained a large establishment of falcons and hounds. The hounds helped the hunters in tracking the wild animals to their chase, the falcons pursued the bird. Barbosa writes that the people of this kingdom (Vijayanagar) were great hunters both of flying game and wild beasts. At Champaner in Gujarat also falcons were kept for hunting of fowls.

Apart from hunting that excited the most to the Mughal emperors and princes, hawking also attracted the interest of the Mughals. The Mughal emperors regarded it a matter of dignity to be accompanied on a march by fowlers carrying many birds on their wrists. Jahangir so much liked hawking and catching the water fowl with the

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40 Ibid. p. 70.
41 Thevenot, op. cit., p. 54. Also see, Jarric, Du, *Akbar and the Jesuits*, Tr. with introduction and notes by C.H. Payne, 1926, Routledge/Broadway, London, p. 55. Father told that the birds of chase, falcons and hawks were also found in Portugal when asked by the emperor Akbar.
44 Barbosa, op. cit. Vol. 1, p. 228
falcon that he always carried boats on his march. Jahangir had four thousands hawks of all kinds.

Royal hawks were bought and bred in a separate department composed of many offices and servants who looked after the royal hawks. All the birds of prey were commonly known as hawks that were kept by the emperors. "every species of the birds of prey used in field sports for catching patridges, cranes, hares, and even, it is said, for hunting antelopes, on which they pounce with violence, beating their heads and blinding them with their wings and claws." These birds were taught to prey animals or to catch the water fowls swimming on the surface of the water. Bakhshish was given to the Mrit Shikar when a particular falcon caught a bird.

Other than catching water fowls with the help of hawks another method was to wear the head cover resembling the bird by the hunter with two holes for eyes for watching the birds. In this way, the hunter drowning his body under water, went towards the birds and pulled them one by one under the water. Sometimes painted earthen pot was used by the hunter to cover his head.

From the accounts of foreigners it seems that the hawking was the amusement of the kings and nobles. On the other hand water-fowling amused both rich and poor alike.

Shooting of birds was another pastime enjoyed by the rich peoples by guns whereas bows and arrows were commonly used.

Archery

Archery and swordsmanship were the order of the day. Every young man with ambition was expected to be good at the bow and sword. We also find that matches and contests were held and rewards were given. Emperor Humayun practised

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47 Roe, op. cit., p. 325.
49 Bernier, op. cit., p. 262.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Careri, op. cit., p. 246. Also see Early Travels in India, op. cit., p.312.
53 Thevenot, op. cit., p. 54.
54 Careri, op. cit., p. 246. Also see Early Travels in India, op. cit., p.312.
archery. Royal princes practised archery and they tried to excel each other. Bernier also records that martial sports like archery and swordsmanship had a special fascination for the people. A Mughal was having a reputation of a strong archer.

Archery was prevalent in those days for safety measures as a method of warfare. Hawkins hired shot and bow-men for his safety during journey. Archery as a martial art is also mentioned by Manrique. Manucci corroborates the same.

Pigeon-Flying

Pigeon flying was an important source of amusement during the period under study by all the classes of societies. But it was considered the sport of 'little people' in the time of Babur and not the pastime of the kings. The involvement of aristocracy and nobility in pigeon-flying is ample in record. Emperor Akbar had termed the word 'Ishqbaazi' for pigeon-flying. Father Monserrate also mentions pigeon-flying as a sort of amusement. The interest of Akbar in pigeon-flying are scattered in many persian accounts also. There were 10,000 khasah (royal) pigeons reared by Jahangir. Apart from serving the purpose of amusement pigeons were also employed for sending intelligence of the departure of the king from his palace and his arrival into the Public Hall to hold audience. Nobles, too, enjoyed it and brought excellent pigeons from foreign countries, like Turan and Iran to be trained for the game.

Polo

Polo is the modern name for the game 'Chaugan' that was the most aristocratic game of the time. In Arabic it was known as Soulajan. It was played on horseback, with a wooden ball which was hit by hammers also of wood. Akbar's intense

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56 Bernier, op. cit., p. 263.
58 Early Travels in India, op. cit., p. 211.
60 Manrique, op. cit., Vol.1, p. 413
63 Ain, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 310.
64 Monserrate, op. cit., p. 198.
fondness for this game bears testimony in the contemporary records. "Superficial observes look upon this game as a mere amusement, and consider it mere play, but men of more exalted view see in it a means of learning promptitude. It tests the value of man, and strengthens bonds of friendship. Strongmen learn in playing this game the art of riding, and the animal learn to perform feats of agility and to obey the reins. Hence, his majesty is very fond of this game. Externally, the game adds to the splendour of the court, but viewed from higher point, it reveals concealed talents." The people of Gujarat were well skilled in playing this game. A rare reference to the game in the travelogues as well as in other historical records suggests its popularity was confined to aristocratic class only.

Animal Combats

The combats of different animals were very popular form of amusement for king, nobles and the commoners alike during the 16th and 17th century. The king and the nobles amused themselves with costly and dangerous combats between elephants, tigers, deer, cheetahs, boars, leopards, bulls and other wild beasts. 'Beast fights' were a source of entertainment in the Vijayanagara Empire says Domingo Paes.

Animal fights were an ever welcome entertainment for excitement-seeking and sensation-loving Mughal Emperors. Animal combats were held since ancient times in India as the Buddhist painter had expressed the vigour and action of fighting bulls in the Ajanta caves through his eloquent art. Rhinoceros, elephant, ram and bull fights constituted one of the most important part of the birthday celebrations at the court of Chandragupta. Several references to animal combats are found in the travelogues of the period under study which are depicted in the miniatures painting and in the Persian sources as well. (Plate- VI).

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70 Ain, op. cit., p. 309.
74 Mandelso, op. cit., p. 43.
The elephant fight was a royal prerogative serving undoubtedly, of the most spectacular sight. Emperor Akbar was very fond of elephant fight which is obvious from his invention of a new method for governing the beast when it becomes unmanageable. The method was the sharp hooks fixed on long handles and bombs filled with powdered sulphur can be lighted and thrown into the arena where it blasts loudly terrifying the beast to stop. Elephant-fights were also stopped by the same means. Akbar took delight in gladiatorial contest also. Jahangir's interest in the elephant-fights is also confirmed by various foreign travellers. Elephant-fights were held five times a week which was a cruel deed often killing or dangerously hurting the men. Whereas Coryat calls it the bravest spectacle in the world as the fighting elephants looks like two small mountains jostle together and can only be parted by a certain fire-works. During the reign of Shahjahan the most graphic and pictorial description is given by Bernier when he writes that the mahavats often risked their lives in the hope of getting rich rewards from the king, and allowances and jobs for their widows and children. Peter Mundy, Manrique, Mandelslo and Manucci also refer to it for the period of Shahjahan. In the reign of Aurangzeb the continuation of elephant-fight is confirmed by John Fryer.

Animal combats of other animals like antelope, boar, buffalo, camel, cock, ram, stag and even monkeys are also mentioned by the foreigners.

The common peoples content themselves with less expensive and harmless fights of he-goats, rams, cocks, quailes, stags and antelopes. Cock-fighting was very
common among the higher middle-class. Varthema witnessed a five hour continuous fight at Tenaisserim. "so that at the end both remained dead". Spacious grounds were reserved in important cities like Agra, Delhi, Fatehpur Sikri, etc., for the amusement of the urban population. Even betting on animal fights were allowed and the stakes on royal deer combats were fixed for mansabdars from Rs. 2/- to 8 mithurs according to the status of the opponents, the deer-keeper and the classes of the deer engaged.

**Wrestling**

Wrestling was also a favourite form of diversion in those days. The monarchs, encouraged it, employed renowned wrestlers, took keen interest in watching wrestling matches and sometimes gave personal exhibition of feats in wrestling. An interesting account of a quarrel between Akbar and his cousin, the son of Mirza Kamran, over the possession of a drum took place once. The matter was decided by a wrestling bout between the two. A wrestling match was organised by the nobles of Humayun, in which the monarch also joined. Whereas Shahjahan's interest can be confirmed by the account of Manucci who writes. "Shahjahan was eager to have at his court all sorts of wrestlers. These were men of great strength who frequently contended in his presence. He also ordered boxing matches".

There was also a certain set of rules to be observed by the participants at a wrestling contest and those who broke them were not only debarred from future match but also sometimes, given exemplary punishment. Many wrestling matches took place under the royal patronage, and the Mughal Kings and princes from Babur downwards took delight in watching them and heartening the contestants by their presence. The winners were profusely rewarded.

Boxing seems to be a form of violent wrestling to Domingo Paes. Boxing contests were held at the court of Akbar. He even kept a large numbers of Persian

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95 Varthema, op. cit., p. 75.
96 Peter Mundy, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 50.
101 *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 335
and Turani boxers at the court. According to De Laet, “they enjoy looking at boxing matches and at conjuring”. Shahjahan ordered boxing matches to be held from time to time.\textsuperscript{104}

**Acrobatics**

Acrobats,\textsuperscript{105} jugglers,\textsuperscript{106} conjurers,\textsuperscript{107} jesters\textsuperscript{108} were spread all over the country and formed the chief source of entertainment to the Indian folk. They engaged themselves in this profession for earning their livelihood and belonged to the lower strata. They moved from place to place entertaining kings and commoners alike. Some of them were also employed by the rulers or the nobles for their own amusements, or for that of their guests. Some of them performed various physical feats sometimes walking on a rope. The rope dancers, called *nats*, entertained the audience with their “wonderful acrobatic feats”.\textsuperscript{109} This statement is corroborated by Abul Fazl. (Plate- VII).

At the land of Malabar in South India, the presence of tumblers and jesters also contributed in the rejoicings.\textsuperscript{110} It appears that the best players in Mughal times came from the Deccan who, as Peter Mundy asserts moved up and down the country exhibiting their antics in different styles.\textsuperscript{111} Young girls also performed acrobatic feats for the entertainment\textsuperscript{112} of their royal patrons. Mundy writes, “the dancinge wenches doe it with of grace, turneinge, traceinge and winderinge their bodies, and with it head, armes and hands, acte many wanton womanish and some lascivious gestures.....”\textsuperscript{113}

Jugglers carrying animals trained to play pranks and knowing how to perform conjuring tricks were common in Mughal India. “The roads and open places were full, too, of jugglers, dancers, players, and such rabble, the noise was deafening, and

\textsuperscript{103} Monserrate, op. cit., p. 198.
\textsuperscript{104} Manucci, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{106} *Early Travels in India*, op. cit., p. 313.
\textsuperscript{107} Ovington, op. cit., p. 153.
\textsuperscript{108} Monserrate, op. cit., p. 198.
\textsuperscript{109} Norris, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-67.
\textsuperscript{110} Barbosa, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{111} Mundy, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 254-55.
\textsuperscript{112} Thevenot, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
the crowd made it even more impossible to see, or find room to move." They travelled from place to place with their wives and children. Fryer writes, "These are Vagrants that travel to delude the Mobile by their Hocus Pocus Tricks." Thevenot alone states that the most popular amusements of the boys were kite flying, climbing on trees and the use of gigs, trumpets, toys etc. As a source of information regarding games, sports and other amusements, in the times of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, Manucci and Bernier may be held as better informed than the other travellers.

Festivals and Fasts

India has been a land of festivals and fasts from the very beginning of Indian history. This interest confirms the religious nature of Indian peoples. These fairs and festivals had made our country very colourful and attractive throughout the year. "We have social and religious, seasonal and regional festivals, many of them jointly celebrated by all the communities." Foreign travellers of 16th and 17th centuries were also not untouched by the joy and happiness spread by the festivals and fasts during the period.

European travelogues as well as non-European travelogues like Bahrai-asrar fi ma 'rifat al-akhyar and Mir 'atu'l Memalik, contains the references of Indian festivals and fasts. All important festivals and fasts were recorded by foreign travellers that passed through their eyes. These travellers have given a picturesque description of festivals and fasts as celebrated during the period under study.

Starting with Muslim festivals and fasts we come to know through evidences in the form of recorded references that the important Muslim festivals were Id-ul-Azha, Id-ul-Fitr, Ramzan, Muharram, Shab-i-Barat and Nauroz.

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114 Pelsaert, op. cit. p. 72. Also see Thevenot, op. cit., p. 33.
117 Thevenot, op. cit., p. 72.
Id-ul-Azha or Id-i-Qurban

It was the feast of sacrifice and was normally held on the 10th day of the last month of the Muslim year. Its celebration under Akbar has been referred to by Abul Fazl. It was celebrated during the Mughal times with great pomp and show as depicted by the travellers. Edward Terry says that "Buccaree signifies the Ram feast in which Mahometans solemnly kill a ram, and roast him in the memorie of that ram which redeemed Ishmael when Abraham was redie to make a sacrifice." Pelsaert tells us that the other Id (Id-ul-Azha) comes after 70 days which commemorates God's mercy to Abraham, when he was about to sacrifice his only son Issac. But the sacrifice was submitted by an angel and instead of Issac, a goat was sacrifice. Therefore, that day was held as a great festival and those who were able will have to sacrifice goat in his house. Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri corroborates the fact that once Jahangir sacrificed three goats with his own hand at this festival.

The Mughal Emperors used to participate in this festival with great enthusiasm which is evident from Peter Mundy's account when Mundy writes that, "The King went to celebrate Buckree Eede [Bakar'id] as much to say as the feast of Goates." He further says that the Moores observe the feast in the memory of Abraham who was ready to sacrifice his son. He recorded that the festival fell on June 19th, 1632 i.e., the 10th of zu'l-Hijja, the month of Pilgrimage to Mecca. Manucci gives a vivid and detail description of the festival and calls it Hid Corban (Id-i-qurban). He says on that day (festival) at nine O'clock, the King comes forth from his palace with great display and majesty and visits the great mosque, where the chief qazi awaits him and the sacrifice of camel was performed in the presence of the Emperor. The qazi was rewarded with seven sets of robes by the King. Fryer also speaks of the festival when the governor went out in pomp to sacrifice a ram or a he-goat. This was done by everyone in his house who could purchase one.

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121 Early Travels in India, op. cit., p.318.
122 Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 73.
125 Ibid.
The Akhbarat-i-Darbar-Mualla (Court Bulletin) mentions Id-ul-Azha which was celebrated on August 10th, 1695. It tells Aurangzeb went to the place of sacrifice and sacrificed two goats with his own 'auspicious hand'. He rewarded Saifullah, Darogha-i-Sarf-Khasas per royal orders, Prince Mohammad KamBaksh sacrificed one camel in the Diwan-i-am. After that Princes A'zam Shah, Kam Baksh, Mohammad Muiz-ud-din and others came and offered greetings of the 'Id to the Emperor.\textsuperscript{128} In the provincial capitals, the governors performed the festival in place of the King, visited the Idgah and sacrificed a goat with the usual rites and ceremonies.

**Id-ul-Fitr**

*Id-ul-Fitr* was also a prominent Muslim festival during the period under study and its significance lies in the fact that it is the festival of breaking of the fast. This day of rejoicing comes after the long drawn fasts of Ramzan\textsuperscript{129} and hence therefore is particularly welcome. It is observed on the first of Shawwal, the tenth Arabic month. Moh. Yasin writes that, it is also known as Id-ul-Sadaqa (of Alms) because the alms are given bountiful in the festival.\textsuperscript{130} Fitra (alms) are given according to Muslim law among the poors and the Faqirs. Pelsaert says, "at the end of this month of fasting comes the great Id. In the morning they go to the great mosques named Idgah, which are usually outside the city, where the Kazis, who are their lawyers offers prayers."\textsuperscript{131} Terry remarks the same when writes, "the Ram-Jan fully ended the most devout Mahometan assemble to some famous misquit, where a Moola recite some parts of the Quran publickly."\textsuperscript{132} People of all classes gather in great mosque and return home in great joy, the great men in full state, the poor in clean white clothes.\textsuperscript{133} On the morning of 'Id' Muslim perform careful ablution.\textsuperscript{134} Jahangir went to Idgah to offer his thanks and prayers.\textsuperscript{135} Friends send each other food accompanied by good wishes, and everyone is very gay because the heavy burden of fasting or abstinence is past.\textsuperscript{136} According to Fryer, during the Mughal age the sight of the new moon which preceded

\textsuperscript{125} Sangar, op. cit., p. 132.
\textsuperscript{129} Roe, op. cit., p. 239.
\textsuperscript{131} Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 73.
\textsuperscript{132} Early Travels in India, op. cit., p. 318.
\textsuperscript{133} Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 73.
\textsuperscript{135} Tizuk-i-Jahangir, op. cit., p. 57.
\textsuperscript{136} Pelsaert, op. cit., p. 73.
the *Id-ul-Fitr* was proclaimed by firing of guns and blowing of trumpets. Fryer further affirms that even Aurangzeb used to celebrate this festival with great enthusiasm.\(^\text{137}\)

Norris also writes, "In a Muslim State the local governor or official announces it by gunfire or beat of drum or other means of proclamation and people congratulate each other that the period of fasting is over. The following day is a day of rejoicing - the *Id* festival."\(^\text{138}\) Norris further tells, "It is not a peculiarly Mughal or Persian custom; it is one observed by all Muslims."\(^\text{139}\)

The Moors in Surat celebrated then Eastern feast with great solemnity. The Governor paraded round the town with great pomp and magnificence, on a richly caparisoned elephant, blazing with jewels and precious stones. The principal officers and merchants of this superb town accompanied him, sumptuously dressed and mounted on fine horses. There were loud fanfares of trumpets and acclamations, in addition to salutes fired at all the gates and bastions, as the Governor passed by. All this lasted till noon.\(^\text{140}\)

**Ramzan**

The sacred month of Ramzan is the month of keeping the fasts in Muslims.\(^\text{141}\) The Muslim society as a whole without distinction observed this holy month of keeping fasts during the Mughal period. We have lots of references from the foreign travellers during the period about the Ramzan fasts. Sidi Ali Reis mentions the month of Ramzan though he did not went into detail. Father Monserrate writes about Akbar that he did not observe the month's fast which is called Ramadan.\(^\text{142}\) Father Pierre du Jarric also gives passing reference of fasting in Ramzan.\(^\text{143}\) Mahmud bin Amir Wali Balkhi also refers to the month of Ramzan.\(^\text{144}\) Thomas Roe was of the view that the strict Mahomedans observed their old law and during the month of Ramzan,

\(^{137}\) Fryer, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 304.
\(^{138}\) Norris, op. cit., p. 145.
\(^{139}\) Ibid.
\(^{142}\) Monserrate, op. cit., p. 64.
\(^{143}\) Jarric, op. cit., p. 146.
\(^{144}\) Iqbal Husain, op. cit., p. 149.
Mahomedan were unwilling to drink wine.\textsuperscript{145} Ramzan, according to Edward Terry was the month for the Muslims when they observed fast and during that period they deemed it necessary to be very religious; to forbear their women, to abstain from 'Meat or Drink'. But after the sunset they could eat at pleasure.\textsuperscript{146} The fast of Ramzan were kept very strictly for a whole Lunar month. The moslem neither eat nor drink throughout one whole day, or until the star appear or have become visible in the evening.\textsuperscript{147} Manrique also confirms that the month of Ramzan have thirty day's fast.\textsuperscript{148} Fryer refers to the fast of Ramzan when nothing was eaten or drunk for the entire day and also to the celebrations after the fast.\textsuperscript{149}

In October 1614, Muqarrab Khan, the Governor of Surat, refused to go abroad the English ship at Swally on the ground that Ramzan was not yet over.\textsuperscript{150} The Moors with a very rigid and avowed Abstinence observe every Year one month, a Fast, which they term the \textit{Ramezan}; during which time they are so severely abstemious, that they stretch not their Hands to either Bread or Water; till the Sun be set, and the Stars appear: no, not the Youths of 12 or 13 Years of Age. This Fast is not kept always at the same Season of the Year, but begins its date annually more early by Eleven Days. To add to the Sanctity of this Celebrated and Solemn Fast, their Mullah, acted with a sacred Zeal, and lively concern for the Souls of the people, will at this time spend whole Nights in the Mosque, in chanting aloud alternately their Divine Hymn, till the approach of the day breaks up their Devotions.\textsuperscript{151} Norris also confirms observing the fasts of Ramzan when he writes the ceremony of saluting the New Moon every month, instead of only after the fast of the month of Ramazan.\textsuperscript{152}

\textbf{Moharram}

Father Monserrate calls it the Musalman ‘nine-day’ festival which is held to honour Imam Hasan and Imam Husain, grandsons of Muhammad. Their father was Ali. They are said to have been conquered by the Christians in a war which they had

\textsuperscript{145}Roe, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 12-13.
\textsuperscript{146}\textit{Early Travels in India, op. cit.}, p. 318.
\textsuperscript{147}Pelsaert, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{148}Manrique, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{149}Fryer, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. I, p. 304.
\textsuperscript{151}Ovington, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 145.
\textsuperscript{152}Norris, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 145.
undertaken in order to establish and spread their grandfather's religious system. There were thereupon cruelly tortured by the unbelievers. For this reason the Musalman fast for nine days, only eating pulse; and on certain of these days, some of them publicly recite the story of the sufferings of Hasan and Husain from a raised platform and their words stir the whole assembly to lamentation and fears. On the last day of the festival funeral pyres are erected and burnt one after the other. The people jump over there, and afterwards scatter the glowing ashes with their feel. Meanwhile they shriek Hasan Hussain' with wild and savage cries. Sidi Ali Reis had started his journey to Ahmadabad in the beginning of Muharram of the year 962 (end of November 1552), accompanied by Mustafa Aga.

Mahmud Balkhi went to Lahore on 23 September, 1625. His observations of the celebrations of Muharram at that place are of great interest since he says that the first ten days of Muharram were divided into two parts. The first five days were of festive celebration on the ground that the Imams had permitted marriages during these days. During these days 'young khattris' wore the dress of Khattri women and leaving their homes spent the whole day 'shamelessly' in pleasure. During the next five days mourning was observed with black dresses being worn. On the 10th Muharram, 'all the Shias and all Hindus close the doors of their houses and shops, and conceal themselves inside like bats'. In this particular Muharram observance, which the author saw, a clash occurred in the market, in which many were killed; 50 Shias and 25 Hindus. Property worth Rs 1, 20, 000 was lost. The reason for the clash occurring is not stated. It is however, significant that the Hindu participated in the observance of Muharram, though there is no known basis of rejoicing in the first five days of Muharram. After a month later Id-ul-Azha, Muharram was observed in commemoration of slaughter of Hasan and Husain. A great noise was made all night for a period of ten days; the men keep apart from their wives, and fast by day. The women sing lamentation and make a display of mourning; in the chief street of the city the men make two coffins, adorn them as richly as they can, and carry them round in the evening with many lights and large crowds attending with great cries of mourning, and noise. The chief celebration is on the last night. No Hindus can venture

153 Monserrate, op. cit., p. 22.
155 Iqbal Husain, op. cit., p.144.
into the streets before midday for even if they should escape with their life at the least
their arms and legs would be broken to pieces. Tavernier inform us that Aurangzeb
had banned the celebration of Muharram festival in his reign. But Persian noble made
no scruple about conforming themselves outwardly to the cult and customs of the
Sunnis. Peter Mundy has given an inaccurate description of Muharram when he
tells that Imam Hasan was a great warrior who was slain by Hindus therefore the
Moores solemnizes his funeral not only by making representative tombs but also
drawing their swords to take revenge from the Hindus. It was dangerous then for
Hindus to stir abroad. This they do for nine or ten days. Whereas, John Fryer
writes, “the Moores solemnize the Exequies of Hosseen Gosseen, a line of ten days
Mourning for two Unfortunate Champions of theirs who perished by Thirst in the
Deserts, fighting against the Christians.”

The Mohurram fell a day or two later, and was celebrated by the Shia sect of
the local Muslims. To Norris’s amazement it passed off without any disturbance on
the part of the Hindu and other inhabitants. It showed that in that part of India at least
there was little or no communal tensions between the different religious bodies.

Shab-i-Barat

Shab-i-Barat or Lailat-ul-Barat, “the night of record, is observed on the
fourteenth night of the eight month, Shaiban, and is also so called because on the
night it is supposed that the lives and the fortunes of the mortals for the coming year
are fixed and registered in Heaven.” Thevenot tells that the Mahometans of Gujarat
celebrated a very different festivals which he had never observed and this was the
“Feast of Choubret”, further he writes, and believe that on that day the good Angels
examine the Souls of the departed, and write down all the good that they have done in
their life-times, and that the bad Angels sum up all their evil actions the same day. So
that everyone employs that day wherein they believe that god takes an account of the
Action of Men, in praying to him, doing Alms-deeds, and sending one another
presents. They end the festival with lights and Bon-fires kindled in the streets and

156 Pelsaert, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
157 Tavernier, op. cit., Vol. II, p.139.
160 Norris, op. cit., p.165
161 Yasin, op. cit., p. 58.
public places, and a great many Fire-works which the about on all hands, whilst the Rich mutually treat one another with collations and feasts which they make in the very streets or shops.\textsuperscript{162} Shahjahan was very particular about this festival and observed it regularly with great pomp and show.

Although Shab-i-Barat is also an important Muslim festival but it was not noticed by most of foreign travellers. Many reasons can be assigned for this. Firstly, it might be possible that they came at that time of the year when Shab-i-Barat didn’t fell. Secondary, it might not be celebrated as that much of splendorous as the other prominent festivals. Thirdly, it might not be celebrated by all i.e., rich as well as common peoples. Even at present day there is difference of opinion about this festival.

**Nauroz**

*Nauroz* was originally a Persian festival. In India it was introduced by Akbar. Basically it was arranged by Akbar in March 1582 to commemorate Gujarat’s Victory. Monserrate writes, “In March 1582, the King arranged for a festival to be held in commemoration of his recent victory. This was called Nauroz.”\textsuperscript{163} But Monserrate was of the view that it was borrowed from Hindus in accordance with ancient tradition, to regard these days as a holiday.\textsuperscript{164}

The Ain says, “It commences on the days when the Sun moves to the Aries (March 21), and lasts till the ninth day of the month of the Persian year. Two days of this period are considered great festivals; when much money and numerous things are given away in presents.”\textsuperscript{165} Du Jarric also writes the same. Du Jarric says, “*The New Year’s Day, takes place when the sun enters the sign of Belier [Aries].*”\textsuperscript{166}

The Nauroz feast was held by Jahangir in honour of the New Year and it lasts for eighteen days.\textsuperscript{167} Nauroz is a custom of solemnizing the New Year and is imitated from the Persian feast that signifies Nine days.\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{162} Thevenot, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{163} Monserrate, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
\textsuperscript{164} *Ibid.*, p. 175
\textsuperscript{165} *Ain, op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 276
\textsuperscript{166} Jarric, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{167} *Early Travels in India, op. cit.*, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{168} Roe, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
Edward Terry observed this feast at Mandu by chance. Terry writes, “the
sunne enters into Aries: from which time the King keeps a feast that is called the
Norris signifying nine days, which time it continues; where all his nobles assemble in
their greatest pomp presenting him with gifts, he repaying them again with princely
rewards; at which time being in his presence.”  
De Laet also tells the same. The
English merchants in India used to sell their goods on the Nauroz days.

Peter Mundy remarks that the Mughal King used to celebrate the Nauroz at the
capital. Shahjahan sat on the peacock throne which cost over a crore of rupees that
was equal to a million sterlings in 1632. The King sat for nine days and nights under
rich and state by pavilion is of clothe of gold, with his umaras about him all marking
the greatest shows of magnificence and mirth they can, in feasting, presenting,
recreating with several shewer and pastime, and dancing wenches, fighting of
Elephants etc. Bagar Khan, governor designate of Gujarat, celebrated the Nauroz
on March 9, 1632, which on his way to Ahmadabad. The masons first made a
chaututra (raised platform) for the purpose. He fired shots from his Shutarnal (a small
gun placed on a camel’s back) and ordered the boat of drums which were placed on
the elephant’s backs and one weighted 16 maunds Jahangir or 1,000 lbs. Trumpets
were sounded. Peter Mundy had heard that he had brought from Orissa drums of
silver and trumpets of gold, “which now the King possessed of, as also jewels and 9
great Elephants.”

Manucci gives a detailed picturesque description of the festival during
Shahjahan’s period. Manucci tells, t he person of royal blood were weighted in
different ways and all the weighted things were distributed among the poors and were
recorded to memorise the occasion. Large gifts were given to the King. The King
scattered his favour to his subjects. But the festival cannot be celebrated with the
same magnificence when the King is in the camp. Thevenot also supports this.
Manrique writes, “The Great Mogol appears in public; in his greatest magnificence
and majesty throughout nine days, in a large, handsome and most richly decorated

169 Early Travel in India, op. cit., p. 310.
This clarifies that the royal court celebrated Nauroz in most extraordinary way.

The festival of Nauroz starts with a fair in Serraglio where ladies and daughters of great lords were permitted to enter. They opened their shops there and brought very rich goods for sale. The King came there and for the sake of pleasure argued for the price. These ladies were entertained with feasting and dancing. Bernier corroborates the same. Shahjahan was fond of the sex and introduced fairs at every festival. Coryat and Manrique observed the Nauroz at Lahore. Everyone dresses best and congratulate and wish happy feast to each other. The common people, as well as the most devout at this time usually ornament the doors and entrances to their houses with green branches, or else whiten them with plaster, daubing Sindul, a reddish-coloured substance, over them as this is an ordinary sign of a festive occasion in this part.

According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Nauroz being a Shia festival was abolished by the devout Sunni Aurangzeb. He transferred it to the coronation festival in the month of Ramzan. He allowed it in the cause of his sons, on their recovery from illness. He however imposed the condition that the money thus collected was to be distributed in charity.

Thomas Coryat also refers to the organising of fair every year by King Jahangir. Coryat writes, "One day in the yeare, for the solace of Kings women, all the tradesmens wives enter the Mohal with somewhat to sell, in manners of a faire; where the King is broken for his women and with his gains that night makes his supper, no man present. By this means hee attaines to the sight of all the prettie wenches of the towne. At such a kind of faire he got his beloved Normahal."

Emperor's Birthday

The Birthday Anniversary of the King was also celebrated as one of the festivals of great rejoicing at the court. Jahangir kept both lunar and solar birthdays,

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175 Thevenot, op. cit., pp. 70-71.
179 Early Travels in India, op. cit., p. 279.
four months after which is called the feast of his birth-day." Thomas Coryat chanced to see Jahangir on his fifty-third birthday anniversary at the Mogul court in Agra. Coryat writes that the day was celebrated with great pomp and Jahangir weighed himself in a pair of golden scales and then the weighed amount was distributed among the poor. Edward Terry writes about Jahangir, "He is on his Birthday, the first of September yearly weighed, and account kept thereof by his physicians thereby guessing at his bodily estate." Manrique explains the magnificence and splendour at Imperial court on Shahjahan's court. Manrique writes, "That year the Majesty was celebrating it in his own palace with many festal ingenuities, dances, spectacles and masquerades, which lasted most of the day. There over, the Emperor left his Imperial throne, and accompanied by a great concourse of princes and lords, proceeded to his mother's palace to see her and receive her felicitations." And then, the Emperor was weighed against different items. All the articles weighed are distributed amongst the poor Bramanes and Baneanes, secretly. Ovington tells: "there is another day in India, as well as in England, which is remarkable, the 5th of November. This day the great Mogul is weighed, and if it's found that he has increased in bulk, above what he weighed the proceeding year, this add excess of Mirth and Joy to the Solemnity; but if he prove lighter in the scales, then diminishes their Triumph, and damp their cheerful Entertainments. The Grandees and officers of state prepare for this Feast, two months before its approach what costly jewels and curious rarities they can anywhere meet with, which they present to the Emperor at this ceremony either to secure his favour or to ingratiate with him for a more exalted station, or Honourable Employ. The Moguls are sometimes weighed against silver, which has been distributed to the poor. Thevenot tell that King's Birthday was celebrated as a great Festival at Delhi and lasts for five days. Thevenot further writes that during five days, there is great rejoicing all over the Town, as well as in the Kings Palace, which is express by Presents, Feastings, Bonefires and Dances; and the King has a special care to give Orders that the best Dancing women and Baladines, be always at court."
The Emperor Birthday was celebrated in the town among the people as Thevenot writes. Careri also says that the days were celebrated with great splendour and the nobles came to wish the King many happy years with presents of many jewels. They presented Shahjahan gold vessels set with jewels to hold scented water. He sat on the throne set with jewels and pearls. Careri misunderstood that the Varshaganth (birthday) and tol (weighing) were two separate festivals.\textsuperscript{188}

Norris has also referred the Birthday celebration of the Great Mogul when he writes that the Mughal was accustomed to celebrate his birthday by distributing money, he accordingly ordered his treasurer to "distribute to all ye Dubasses, peons, parriers, cooleys a Rupee a piece & to inform ye occasion."\textsuperscript{189}

Tavernier was a spectator of Shahjahan's Birthday. Tavernier says that the Emperor's Birthday which was celebrated as a grand festival lasted for five days. The Emperor was weighed on his Birthday. It was the weighing ceremony and if Emperor weighed more than in the preceding year, the rejoicing is greater. After weighing Emperor Seats himself on the richest of the thrones and then all the nobility of the Kingdom come to salute him and offer presents. The court ladies also send gifts to the Emperor. All the gifts sums up in a huge amount and his time it is more than 2,250,000.\textsuperscript{190}

Bernier had also described the Emperor's Birthday in detail. Bernier writes that the joy of the courtiers increased when it was found that Aurangzeb weighed two pound more than the previous year. The weighing ceremony was held on the third day of the festival. Omrahs were also weighted. The festival was held every year.\textsuperscript{191}

New Moon was also hailed with general festivities, 'when, all malice apart, the Moors (i.e. Muslims) embrace one another, and at the night there of make a jubilee, by firing of guns, blowing of trumpets, feasting and praying very devoutly'\textsuperscript{192} the eclipse of sun or moon was deemed an hour of crisis for the great luminaries. Loud cries announced the commencement of an eclipse. The Muslims generally occupied

\textsuperscript{188} Careri, op. cit., pp. 245-46.
\textsuperscript{189} Norris, op. cit., p. 174.
\textsuperscript{190} Travermier, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 301-302.
\textsuperscript{191} Bernier, op. cit., p. 270.
\textsuperscript{192} Fryer, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 304
themselves in prayer and fasting till the shadow had passed over. This was perhaps an innovation in imitation of the bathing festival of Hindus on such occasions.

The anniversaries (‘Urs) of some of the reputed saints accounted for great festive gatherings about whom more hereafter. Coronation ceremonies of Kings were other festive occasions. The reference of other Muslim festivals such as Akhiri Chahar Shambe, Bara Wafat, Chehelum, Id-i-Milad and Ab-i-Pashan (Plate-VIII) are also found in contemporary sources but our travellers did not find them significant enough to record them in their narratives. (See Appendix-II)

Festivals and fasts are very common features of Hindu religion and make the Hindu religion hale and hearty throughout the year as it is even today. Almost all Hindu festivals and fasts were observed during the Mughal period as it is observed nowadays. And this is so because all the Hindu festivals and fasts are associated with mythological, historical and astronomical considerations; while others, like Vasant Panchami, Holi, Ganesh etc., were observed to mark the change of seasons. Ramnaumi and Janmashtami were observed to commemorate the Birth anniversaries of Lord Rama and Shri Krishna respectively. Like Muslim festivals during the period under study Hindu fests were also celebrated with great enthusiasm among the rich and poor. Mughal Emperors also took interest in these festivals. One marked feature of the Mughal Emperor in this sphere was the adoption of some Hindu festivals like Holi, Diwali, Dasehra etc., which were celebrated with equal enthusiasm, both outside and inside the court. The Christian were also allowed to enjoy the celebration of Christmas, Michael Mass and Easter festivals. Sometimes payments were also made for these celebrations.

Many of the Hindu festivals had attracted the concentration of the foreign travellers during the medieval period. But some of the Hindu festivals do not find a mention in the travelogues like Dasehra, Shivratri, Rakshabandhan, Ramnaumi, Vasant Panchami, Janmashtami, etc. Although these festival were celebrated as are mentioned in contemporary Persian and vernacular sources, and that too in detail. The

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192 Ibid. p. 308.
reasons one can assign to this lacuna may be the ruling class were Muslims and for the reason foreigner might had tried to concentrate more on the Muslim ruling society. Another reason might be those Hindu festivals which were left by the travellers may not fell during the period of stay of the travellers and can be assumed to be insignificant in the opinion of the travellers.

The Hindu festival mentioned by the travellers are Holi, Diwali, The Swinging festival, The Solar and Lunar Eclipses, The Jagannath festival, The Bathing festival at Ganga, Festival of Siva, and some local Hindu festivals are also observed by travellers. All the Hindu festivals that are mentioned by the travellers during the period of study will be taken one by one to avoid the complications in the study.

**Holi**

Holi seems to be the most popular festival enjoyed and celebrated by the masses as well as by the higher classes and lower classes of Hindu society when Abdul Fazl writes that the Holi, one of the ancient festivals of Hindus, was the most popular day of rejoicing, music and feast, as it is today.\(^\text{197}\)

According to Hindu mythology the festival of holi is celebrated to enjoy the victory of Prahlad over his demon aunt Holika. Therefore the previous night to the day of holi celebration Hoikadahan is made by burning a huge bonefire and sharing happiness among the peoples by singing, dancing etc. On the next day of Holikadahan the festival is celebrated with great rejoicing followed by singing, dancing, feasting and throwing coloured water on one another. Monserrate tells us, that, the Hindus were free to throw dust upon anyone for a period of fifteen days and he levels the festival as degraded and a savage one. Whereas Thevenot writes, “They (Hindu) reckon their months by moons and with great devotion celebrate their Feast, called Houly, which lasts 2 days. At that time their temples are fed by people, who come to pray and make their oblations there; the rest of the celebration consists in dancing by companies in the streets, to the sound of trumpets. At this feast they are clothed in a dark red, and may go to visit their friends in Masquerade. “Those of the same tribe eat together, and at night they make bonfires in the streets. Their feast is celebrated yearly at the full moon in February, and ends by the destruction of the figure of a giant,\(^\text{197}\)  

against which a little child shoots arrows, to represent what the people are made to believe. Peter Mundy compares it with the French festival. "There is Holi of the Hindus used in the same manner as Shrovedite is in France, by eating, drinking and feasting, playing and throwing sweet oil and water with red powder on that again, so all bedaubing themselves; the courser sort towards the end of it about old shoes, rags, dirt and dust etc." John Drake, a servant of the East India Company was warned of the danger of sending off the indigo at that time 'in respect of the Gentiles feast, which they call Hooly, a mad time for two or three day's continuance'. The direct participation of Mughal Emperor in the festival of Holi is not clear from the account of foreign travellers but found in other contemporary sources. (Plate- IX).

**Diwali**

*Diwali* was one of the important festivals of Hindus during the Mughal period as it is now. It is also known as 'Dipawali' or 'row of lamps' and was celebrated in the month of Kartik. Diwali is celebrated to remember the victory of Hindu god Rama over the Demon King Ravana who had forcibly captured Sita (Wife of Rama) for fourteen years. When Rama took back Sita from the captivity of Ravana and destroyed his and came back to Ayodhya the people there were very happy to see them and therefore they welcomed them by lightening lamps. The houses of the Hindus were well cleaned and washed and the Laxmi Poojan was performed at home. The houses were illuminated with the lamps and the people visited each other and observe feasts.

R.C. Temple calls it as 'feast of lights' as it actually is. He says further, "Apart from the so-called classical legends attached to this festival, the object of cleaning and lighting up the houses, and placing light outside them, is to make things pleasant for the spirit of the dead, who, on the Diwali night, are supposed to visit their old homes."<sup>200</sup>

Peter Mundy remarked that the festival lasted seven or eight days during which time 'they seldom doe anythinge in Marchandiseinge." On that night the

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200 Mundy, *op. cit.*, Vol II, p. 220
Hindus set lamps and lights in their windows and terraces. Fryer says, "The first New Moon in October, is the Baniyans Dually, a great day of celebration to the Papan Dieties, when they are very kind-hearted, presenting their Masters with Gifts, as Knowing they shall be no losers, and entertain one another with mutual Mirth and Banqueting." Both Peter Mundy and Fryer had talked the joyous aspect of the festival of Diwali. But Mahmud Balkhi and Careri had related it with sorcery. "The local Hindus believed that, on the night of Diwali, they (Liver-Eaters in Orissa) walked 300 Kos in procession and ate all those they found in the way." Careri writes, "The chief Divalis, or Festivals are two, when the moon decreases in October. All those Heathen Sorcerers work wonders by the help of the Devil, but particularly then Juggler's and Tumblers, who, without all doubt deceive the eye."

Gambling was considered auspicious on this occasion. On the night of that day they light lamps, and friends and those who are dear assemble in each other houses and pass their time busily in gambling. As the eyes of this caste (Vaishya) are on profit and interest, they considered carrying over and opening new accounts on that day auspicious. Akbar was interested in the festive aspect of the celebration, while Jahangir preferred gambling and sometimes ordered his attendant to play the games in his presence for two or three nights. Careri also associated the Diwali festival with the Bania caste. "And once a year, which is then (Bania) Grand Festival Season, called the dually time, they have a custom, much like that of our New-Year-gifts, of presenting the President and council, the Minister, Surgeon, and all the Factors and writes with something valuable."

Diwali was celebrated by all members of the Hindu Society as it is great source of welcoming fortune and luck. Diwali was celebrated at the Mughal Court by Akbar and Jahangir. But participation of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb obscure. Although the Hindu Society enjoyed the festival during the period of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb

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201 Ibid., p.146
204 Careri, op. cit., p. 264.
205 "Fryer, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 309
207 *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, op. cit., p. 245.
209 Ibid.
with the same grandeur as it was during the reign of Akbar and Jahangir as gleaned from the travelogues.

**Hook-Swinging**

The foreign travellers of Mughal period gives the reference of a very peculiar festival known as Hook-Swinging. It was a kind of religious festival observed during the Mughal period in the region of Bengal. The description of the travellers presents this festival as a 'festival of penances'. Tavernier, Bowrey and Pietro Della Valle had mentioned this festival. Della Valle had witnessed Hook-Swinging at Ikkheri (South India) in November 1623. There he saw a beam raised 'at a good height' where on certain holy days some devout people hung themselves by the flesh by the hooks fastened to the top of it. They remained hanging in this manner for sometimes, blood running down in the meantime. They flourished their swords and bucklers in the air and sang songs in honour of their gods. He also saw near the temple big cars or chariots in which on certain festivals they carried their gods in procession.²⁰⁹ In the hook-swinging festival the poor people hooked themselves on the iron hooks attached on the branches of trees for one hour or two hours, till the weight of the body drags the flesh; but strangely there is no blood to be seen either on the cut flesh or on the hook.²¹⁰ Bowrey had described the hook-swinging festival in a little bit different way as he instead of hooks attached to trees had mentioned the poles on which the hooks was attached.²¹¹ But both had drawn the same inference as from the writings it is clear that the sufferer were the peoples and the promoters to this cruel act were the wicked Brahmins. The relatives of the pennants brought presents like betel, money, or pieces of calico which is distributed by the pennants among the poor.²¹² While the people came for voluntarily swinging a great rejoicing was made by the spectators.²¹³ Both the Travellers had observed this festival in Bengal. No other traveller mention this festival as if it was not observed everywhere except for Bengal.

Jagannath Festival

The Jagannath Festival or the 'Rathyatra' was observed by the people of Orissa in which the idol of God Jagannath was kept in a beautiful and richly decorated chariot, and it was taken with the procession accompanied with music and other acts of rejoicing. Jagannath is the name of Krishna who is the 'Lord of Universe' in Hindu religion.

The Jagannath Festival was held once in a year during the month of June-July and the Hindu pilgrim came to the place to wash their sins. If anyone was likely to lose his caste for doing the sin against his caste, “soe forced to a long pilgrimage to Jagrenaut [Jagannath] their great pagod in Bengall.”

At Midnapore, Mahmud Balkhi met peoples going for the ensuring Jagannath Festival at Puri. Jagannath is at a distance of one month's journey from Midnapore. Mahmud Balkhi's description of the Car Festival is of great interest. He gives the details of the chariot. Mahmud Balkhi, Tavernier, Bernier, Manrique, Thevenot, Norris and Bowrey had written about the Jagannath festival at length.

The festival was held for eight or nine day's space. A superb wooden machine is constructed which is set on fourteen or sixteen wheels like those of a gun-carriage, and drawn or pushed along by the united exertions of fifty or sixty persons. The idol, Jagannat, placed conspicuously in the middle, richly attired, and gorgeously adorned, is thus conveyed from one temple to another. About 15,000 or 20,000 pilgrims visited the Jagannath daily as the pagoda being the object of the highest devotion by the Indians, who visit it from everywhere. Fray Sebastian Manrique also says that Jagannath is a noted place of pilgrimage which large numbers of people visited and presented offerings. To wash away their sins the heathens made ritual suicide under the chariot. Manrique writes. “Some of the jogues and ministers of hell, seized with a demonical frenzy and excited by the acclamations of the Barbarian heathen, voluntarily offer up their wretched lives to this demon, throwing themselves down in the centre of the road along which the procession passes with lots chariots fall of

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214 Norris, op. cit., p. 121.
215 Iqbal Husain, op. cit., p. 149.
216 Ibid.
217 Bernier, op. cit., p. 304.
idols. These pass over their unhappy bodies, leaving them crushed and mutilated. Such men are looked on as martyrs."\textsuperscript{219}

Singing and dancing were the common features of the Hindu festivals mentioned by the travellers. Balkhi writes, "A troupe consisting of about one hundreded Kalawants, and natnis (dancers) are engaged in singing, and drummers and kettle-drum beaters create a thunderous round from all sides."\textsuperscript{220} Bowrey also writes about the rejoicing at the festival. "Many hundreds of women rare here maintained to dance on their offerings, with all varieties of musick that Asia affordeth, to play before their Gods, V.2 f. Pipes, drums, trumpets, with varieties of stringed instruments, with multitudes of voices very delegate to heare."\textsuperscript{221}

The Hindus believed that they must visit the Jagannath once in life so that the sins of their forefathers would be forgiven and if they are careless and indolent in this regard, they would invite the wrath of the Ten Avatars.\textsuperscript{222}

The Jagannath festival was very much similar to the Dashahara of Doab, Bengal and Rajasthan. The festival-cum-pilgrimage was participated by the Hindu Society (Pilgrim's) from all over the country during the Mughal period.

**Education and Learning**

The period of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were significant from the point of view of progress of education in India. However, for the first half of the sixteenth century there is dearth of evidences on the education system coming from the accounts of foreign travellers who visited mostly the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagara in south India. But enough information is preserved in the travelogues on the education and learning for the Mughal Empire in the north India which has ample corroboration from other contemporary and non-contemporary sources.

Mughal emperors had given patronage to education and learning as a result the scholars and intellectuals flocked to their court, which were encouraged a lot by their


\textsuperscript{220} Iqbal Husain, op. cit., p. 150.

\textsuperscript{221} Bowrey, op. cit., p. 14.

\textsuperscript{222} Iqbal Husian, op. cit., p.149.
The foreign travellers also felt this development of education which can be inferred from their accounts.

Although the reign of Babur didn’t see the visit of any foreign traveller in north India but his great literary genius may be inferred from his concern regarding minutest details such as construction of sentences, spellings and clarity in his letter to Humayun. He entrusted the department of Shuhrat-i-Ain (Public Works Department) with the responsibility of building schools and colleges along with the publication of a gazette.

Humayun, too, was highly cultured, learned and a true patron of scholars. Humayun also built a Madarsah at Delhi. Shaikh Hussain was appointed as its teacher. Besides, the scholars were patronized by him who prospered at his court and contributed greatly towards the education and literary activities in the country. Sidi Reis, the Turkish Admiral who was also a scholar had happened to come to India only by an accident was insisted to remain at court by Humayun till the winter rains end. Humayun was so curious to learn the Ottoman admiral’s skills that he asked Reis, “Show me how one uses astronomical tables and the perpetual calendar for solar and lunar eclipses, as well as the astrolabe, teach me the treatise all this in three months, you will be given leave to depart.” Humayun appreciated poetry very much therefore, Reis, had to compose ghazels occasionally to gain his favour.

Akbar inaugurated a new era in the field of education in India as prior to his accession the education was primarily religion and moral training. But he transformed the ideas and objectives of education from being strictly religious to purely secular which led to the changing the form of education. Akbar instructed numerous maktabs, madarshahs for both resident and day scholars. The most

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227 Alam Muzaffar, op. cit., p. 112.
228 Reis, op. cit., pp. 54-55.
admirable and noteworthy of all was a big college built by Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri. He also brought reforms in the 'Curriculum' and the 'Method of Teaching'.

Jahangir's interest in promoting the course of education was so deep that soon after his accession to the throne, he repaired and constructed even those madrasahs and maktabs that had for thirty years, been the dwelling places of birds and beasts, and populated them with professors and students. He made arrangements for the construction of mosques, madrasahs and khanqahs. Jahangir issued a regulation throughout the empire that the property of a heirless deceased was to be appropriated by the government and utilised for building and repairing madrasahs, monasteries etc.

Shahjahan's great interest in education and learning is reflected as Lahore, Ahmedabad, Burhanpur, Jaunpur, Sirhind, Thaneswar and Ambala became famous seats of learning and attracted students from distant places. Shahjahan was a true patron of learned men and scholars and encouraged learning. He greatly patronized scholars of arts and sciences and even encouraged the scholars from abroad granting them stipends and pensions.

Aurangzeb also exhibited interest in the field of public instruction and general promotion of learning among his subjects. He took keen interest that his subjects be educated and consequently for their benefit founded numberless maktabs and madrasahs in his kingdom and also maintained all the endowments made by previous Emperors and private benefactors in favour of educational institutions. His interest in the education of the Bohras of Gujarat where he sent trained teachers and arranged monthly examination is really praiseworthy. In 1678, he granted a large sum of money for the reconstruction of the old maktabs and madrasahs in Gujarat. He helped

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231 Jaffar, S.M., Education in Muslim India, (1000-1800), Idarah-i-Adabiyyat-i-Delli, Delhi, 1973, p. 86-87.
232 Law, op. cit., pp. 175, 181.
238 Sahay, op. cit., p. 103.
239 Jaffar, S.M., Education in Muslim India, op. cit., p. 100.
students in proportion to their proficiency. He even confiscated the building belonging to the Dutch in Lucknow, known as Firangi Mahal and had it converted into a madrasah and gave it even to the families of Muslim scholars.

Muslim education in India during the period under study was given by three agencies as follows: (a) Schools and colleges (b) mosques and monasteries and (c) private houses that represented the higher, secondary and primary stages of education respectively. Religion formed the basis of education henceforth, most of the makhtaba and madrasas were attached to masjids (mosques). Emperor Akbar was the first to introduce some effective changes in the educational system then in vogue, so that religion and secular education could be imparted at the same time.

The primary or elementary education was given in 'makhtabs' or primary schools and the private houses that were found everywhere in the country. The age of the beginners varied from four to five years particularly the Mughal princes. Babur sent Humayun to Madrasah at the age of four years four months and four days. Humayun sent Akbar and Akbar sent Jahangir on the same age. Manucci informs that the education of the royal princes normally began when they attained the age of five years and then they were made over to learned men and courteous enunuchs who taught them reading, writing as well as liberal and literary arts.

The ceremony of putting a child to a 'maktab' was commonly known as 'Bismillahkanah' or 'Maktab Ceremony'. At the hour fixed, generally in consultation with an astrologer, the child began his first academic lesson from his teacher. The Muslim nobles would not necessarily send their children to school, but usually employed tutors to teach them at home. Whereas, Mandelslo observes, "Muslims took special interest to educate their sons as soon as they reached the school joining age appears to be true only in case of the highly placed class of Muslim

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240 Bernier, op. cit., p. 292.
241 Ibid.
242 Jaffar, S.M., The Mughal Empire from Babur to Aurangzeb, Ess Ess, Delhi, 1936, p. 386.
244 AkbarNama, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 201.
245 Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, op. cit., p. 6.
248 Ibid.
249 Bernier, op. cit., p. 228.
nobles. The common Mohammadan was reluctant to attend to his studies and preferred to be trained in the art of warfare and to be enlisted in the Imperial Army where he could hope for a bright future.\textsuperscript{250}

The secondary education was imparted in mosques and 'khanqahs' (Muslim monasteries) which included both secular as well as religious education. These mosques were numerous in numbers. Khanqahs were started by religious persons who were held in high esteem. These places played a prominent part in the diffusion of knowledge in the country. The subjects taught were grammar, logic, rhetoric, theology, metaphysics, literature, jurisprudence and sciences. The medium of instruction in these schools was Persian.

Higher education was imparted in the 'Madrasas' or colleges which were situated in towns and cities. The Muslim seats of learning were Agra, Lahore, Ahmadabad, Burhanpur, Jaunpur, Sirhind, Thaneswar and Ambala.\textsuperscript{251} Delhi, Gujarat, Kashmir, Fatehpur Sikri, Lucknow, Gwalior and Sialkot were also important seats of Muslim education but were not mentioned in travelogues.

Hindu education was imparted mainly through agencies like tols, pathshalas and private tutors. The teacher in these educational institutions was in most cases, Brahmans, and they had practically monopolised the teaching profession.\textsuperscript{252}

The primary education to Hindu boys was given by the pathshalas. Generally, these pathshalas had their own buildings. In some cases when a suitable accommodation for the pathshala could not be found in towns or villages, it would sit in some spacious buildings attached to a rich man's mansion or even under the shade of a tree.\textsuperscript{253} In the absence of modern school equipments, a student in the elementary school was first of all, required to practice the art of writing on the floor, covered with sand or dust. A novice in such schools was, first of all, required to acquire knowledge of the alphabet. Then he was given some lessons in attaining proficiency in spelling, reading and writing followed by a working knowledge of practical arithmetic. After a general smattering of the above subjects, a student in such pathshalas was required to

\textsuperscript{250} Mandelslo, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{253} Bernier, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 334.
study grammar, which contained the declension, conjugation, syntax etc. When he had acquired a sound knowledge of Sanskrit and its grammar, the *Puranas* formed his next subject of study.254

**Royal Education**

The education of the Mughal royal princes found special attention in the accounts of the travellers which may be assigned to the special care and concern paid by the reigning monarch in the academic training and achievement to the royal princes. Father Du Jarric writes, "His Majesty (Akbar) came often to see what his sons were learning."255 Another instance from the account of Father Monserrate cited is, "He (Akbar) gave the prince's tutor authority to punish his pupils if they committed any offence."256

The education of the royal princes commenced at the age of five when they were taught to read and write the language.257 Very learned men258 were assigned as tutors to educate the royal princes. Besides, the princes were also put under excellent trainers to learn the use of arms, riding and archery. The trainers gave great care and attention to the education of the princes who were trained rigorously in seclusion.259 The accounts of Bernier and Manucci are very significant in relation with the princely education under the Mughals.

The dissatisfaction of the Emperor Aurangzeb's in the useless instructions given to the princes for which he seems to be rebuking his teacher is commonly cited by secondary authors. Aurangzeb emphasised that the teachings of princes should be in history, geography, languages and customs of the neighbouring states, the art of warfare as well as that of laying siege and concluded peace and the principles of good government.260

Emperor Akbar had even permitted Jesuit Fathers to open the 'Portuguese School' in the empire, for those, who desire to read and write Portuguese so that the doctrines of

254 Ibid., p. 335.
255 Jarric, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
256 Monserrate, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
257 Manucci, *op. cit.*, I, p. 323.
258 Monserrate, *op. cit.*, p. 203, Shaikh Faizi was employed as tutor to see the princes.
259 Ibid.
Christianity could be taught more easily. Akbar had admitted his second son prince Murad to this ‘school’ where his schoolmates were the children of the princes and higher nobility. Father Antonio Monserrate was entrusted as the tutor of prince Murad.

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263) Ibid., p. 36