ABSTRACT

In the present thesis an attempt has been made to study the social set up and culture in Mughal India. The emphasis of the thesis is on religious trends and thought, Sufi and Bhakti, social condition, language and literature, architecture and painting, and fine arts etc. I had to cover a vast research through empirical, philosophical and national inquiry. It has been found difficult to be both comprehensive and intensive. Some work has been done on the cultural history of Mughal India, but no systematic study has been made. This thesis is a humble attempt to fill this gap in our studies.

The source material for the study is varied and scattered. What we possess is a series of glimpses furnished by Persian chronicles, travelers accounts and indigenous writers, who noted what appeared to them of interest. The help form the secondary sources is also taken.

The present thesis has been divided into six chapters besides the Preface and Conclusion. A brief resume of each chapter is given below.

The first chapter deals with the Religious Trends and Thoughts of the Mughal period. Particularly the Akbar cosmopolitan outlook and others equally Mughal emperor played an important role for the peace and prosperity of nationalized and secularized India. It is noticed that the Mughal emperors of India were far more liberal than their predecessors (Delhi Sultan). They gave such rights and concessions to non-Muslims that the conquered people had never enjoyed under any rule. Akbar employed non-Muslims to posts of distinction. Raja Todarmal was made Finance
minister and for some time he also held the post of Prime Minister as well. In order to please his non-Muslim subjects, Akbar removed all tax; prohibited the slaughter of the cow and himself abstained from beef, garlic and onions; and Jaziya in 1563 and 1564 respectively. The sole aim of Akbar liberal attitude towards Hindus was bring the people of the two religious closer. He attempted to bring harmony between Muslims and non-Muslims and did succeed to some extent in his effort. Aurangzeb (1658-1707) tried to cement the Hindu-Muslim relation as far as possible. His tolerance is proved from Benaras Farman dated Jamadiul Awwal 1069/march 10, 1659, issued the local muslim officers to safeguard the Hindus and preserve their temples, testifies to his liberal attitude towards his Hindu subjects. Bernier, contemporary French traveller, observes that non-Muslims enjoyed full religious freedom under Aurangzeb. The allegation that Aurangzeb tried to minimize number of Hindu officials in the government service is baseless – proved from Prof. Ather’s Ali book Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas and Culture, OUP, 2006.

The matrimonial alliances with the rajput princesses, Sikh Guru tussle, issue of conversion and re-imposition of the Jaziya, destruction of the temple and the Shivaji problems is shown in the light of scientific temperament.

The second chapter devotes to Sufi and Bhakti Movement. The new ideas of some saints and thinkers of Mughal India have been discussed. The way to God and salvation, proposed by them, was connected neither with canonical knowledge, nor with caste purity, nor with access to sacred
books. Changes were introduced by the Enlightened saints (sufi and Bhagat) in many a traditional criteria of purity, saintless virtue. The values of human nature, according to the Sufi and Bhakti saints were not dependent on one’s caste, community and lineage. The religious reformist schools and movements with their criticism of traditional and empty forms of worship and their attempts to decanonize and humanize religion, formed a bridge however, narrow, over which the thought and culture of India moved from the middle ages into the nineteenth century and further. Progressive trends (Nirgun Bhakti) of medieval Indian thought were never fully victorious, but they succeeded in producing a tradition of their own, in producing people who could discard some obsolete ideas and move forward, at the same time preserving all that was useful in their legacy. These are main facts of the second chapter.

Chapter third covers the Social Conditions. Hindu-Muslim society, feudal system, trade and education has been brightly picked up during the Mughal period. Chapter further mentions different types and designs of costumes of men and women of different social gradations, both amongst the Hindus and the Moslems. Besides it also throws fresh light, on the toilets and ornaments of both the sexes. Contemporary literary works have been copiously quoted, and at the same time, the data collected from this source have been critically compared with those obtained from the Persian chronicles and the accounts of the foreign travelers. The chapter discusses in considerable details, the social status of women in those days. Elaborate references have been made to the prevalence of certain almost universal social features like early marriage, dowry divorce (among the Moslems and
the lower caste Hindus in particular), Purdah, polygamy, Sati, Jauhar, and Prostitution. The 'harem and slaves' maintained by the Emperors, Rajput rajas and the nobles has been elaborately described. The pleasures and pains of the inmates of these 'Harems' and the chief sources of their recreation have also been discussed. References have also been made to the pitiable lot of the Hindu widows. Under the heading social life the festivities, food habits, and religious practices have been considered.

The chapter fourth analyse the Language and Literature. It was due to the encouragement, patronage and liberal outlook of the Mughal rulers which led to the development and enrichment of the Persian particularly and the local languages and literature which played an important role in integrating and beautifying the diversity of India through out the Mughal period.

The important role of Persian and Sanskrit-Hindi as vehicles of thought and government at the all India level, and the development of regional languages, largely as a result of the growth of the Bhakti movement, have already been mentioned. Regional languages also developed due to the patronage extended to them by local and regional rulers.

These trends continued during the 16th and seventeenth centuries. By the time of Akbar, knowledge of Persian had become so widespread in north India that he dispensed with the tradition of keeping revenues records in the local language (Hindavi) in addition to Persian. Persian prose and poetry reached a climax under Akbar's reign. Abul Fazl who was the
leading historian of the age, set a style of prose-writing which was emulated by many succeeding generations. The leading poet of the age was his brother, Faizi who helped in Akbar’s translation department. The translation of the Mahabharata was carried out under his supervision. Utbi and Naziri were the two other leading Persian poets. Hindus also contributed to the growth of Persian literature. Apart from literary and historical works a number of famous dictionaries of the Persian language were also compiled during the period.

In Hindi, the Padmavat, the story written by the Sufi saint, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, used the attack of Alauddin Khalji on Chittor as an allegory to expound Sufi ideas on the relations of soul with God, along with Hindu ideas about maya.

Medieval Hindi in the Brij form, that is the dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Agra was also patronized by the Mughal emperor. From the time of Akbar, Hindi poets began to be attached to the Mughal court. A leading Mughal noble, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khana, produced a fine blend of Bhakti poetry with Persian ideas of life and human relations. Thus, the Persian and the Hindi literary traditions began to influence each other. The most influential Hindi poet was Tulsidas who venerated Rama as a god and hero, and he used a dialect of Hindi spoken in the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Regional languages acquired stability and maturity and some of the finest lyrical poetry was produced during this period. The alliance of Krishna with Radha and the milkmaids, pranks of the child Krishna and
stories form the *Bhagwat Puran* figure largely in lyrical poetry in Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Rajasthani, Marthi, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Urdu and Gujarati during this period. Many devotional hymns to Rama were also made. Both Hindus and Muslims contributed in this. Thus, Alaol composed in Bengali and also translated from Persian.

This undoubtedly expresses the sentiments of all those writing in local languages. It also shows the confidence and the status acquired by these languages. Due to the writings of the Sikh gurus, Panjabi received a new life.

The fifth chapter *Architecture and Painting* deals the magnificent forts, palaces, gates, public buildings, mosques, *baolis* (water bank or well), etc. constructed during the Mughal period.

Akbar was the first Mughal ruler who had the time and means to undertake construction on a large scale. Akbar took a close personal interest in the work of construction both at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. Persian and central Asian influence can be seen in the glazed blue tiles used for decoration in the walls or for tiling the roofs. For their forts, the Mughals drew on the developed Indian traditions of fort building, such as the ones at Gwalior, Jodhpur, etc. The climax of fort building was reached at Delhi where Shah Jahan built his famous Red Fort.

In 1572, Akbar commenced a palace-cum-fort complex at Fatehpur Sikri. 36 km. from Agra-along with a large artificial lake, it included many buildings in the style of Gujarat and Bengal. But the most magnificent building was the mosque and the gateway to it called the Buland Darwaza
(the lofty gate) built to commemorate Akbar’s victory in Gujarat. The gate is in the style of what is called a half dome petal. This devise, borrowed from Iran, became a feature in Mughal buildings later.

With the consolidation of the empire, the Mughal architecture reached its climax. Towards the end of Jahangir’s reign one seek the beginning of the practice of putting up buildings entirely of marble and decorating the walls with floral designs made of semi-precious stones. This method of decoration, called pietra dura, became even more popular under Shahjahan who used it on a large scale in the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal brought together in a pleasing manner all the architectural forms brought together in a pleasing manner all the architectural forms developed by the Mughals. The chief glory of the Taj is the massive dome and the four slender minarets linking the platform to the main building. The decoration are kept to a minimum. delicate marble screens, pietradora inlay work and Kisoks (Chhatris) adding to the effect. Mosque-building also reached its climax under Shahjahan. A lofty gate, tall, slender minarets, and a series of domes are a feature of the Jama Masjid at Delhi.

Although not many buildings were constructed during Aurangzeb reign. The Mughal architectural traditions based on a combination of Hindu and Turko-Iranian forms and decorative designs continued without a break into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus, Mughal traditions influenced the palaces and forts of many provincial and local Kingdoms.
Further the Mughals made distinctive contribution in the field of painting. They introduced new themes depicting the court, battle scenes and the chase, and added new colours and new forms. They created a living tradition of painting which continued to work in different parts of the country long after the glory of the Mughals had disappeared. A part form the Jains, some of the provincial kingdoms, such as Malwa and Gujart extended their patronage to painting during the fifteenth century. But a vigorous revival began only under Akbar. While, at the cost of the Shah of Iran, Humayun had taken into his service two master painters who accompanied him to India. Under their leadership, during the reign of Akbar, a painting workshop was set up in one of the imperial establishment (Karkhanas). A large number of painters, many of them from the lower caste, were drawn from different parts of the country. From the beginning, both Hindus and Munshis joined in this work. Thus, Dasavant and Basawan were of the famous painters of Akbar’s court. Apart from illustrating Persian books of fables, the painters were soon assigned the tasks of illustrating the Persian text of the Mahabharata, the historical work Akbar Nama, and others. Indian themes and Indian scenes and landscapes, thus, came in vogue and helped to free the school from Persian influence. Indian colours, such as peacock blue, the Indian red, etc., began to be used. Above all, the somewhat flat effect of the Persian style began to be replaced by the roundedness of the Indian brush, giving the pictures a three-dimensional effect.

Mughal painting reached a climax under Jahangir who had a very discriminating eye. Jahangir claims that he could distinguish the work of
each artist in a picture. Under Jahangir special progress was made in portrait paintings of animals. Mansur was the great name in this field. Portrait painting also became fashionable.

Under Akbar, European painting was introduced at the court by the Portuguese priests. Under their influence, the principles of foreshortening near and distant people and things could be placed in perspective was quietly adopted.

While the tradition continued under Shahjahan, Aurangzeb’s lack of interest in painting led to a dispersal of the artists to different places of the country. This helped in the development of painting in the states of Rajasthan and the Punjab hills. The Mughal tradition of painting was, however, revived during the 18th century under the patronage of the successors of Aurangzeb painting on mythological themes, such as the alliance of Krishna with Radha, the barha masa (seasons) or the rajas (melodies). The Pahari school continued these traditions.

The sixth chapter gives the information about the Fine Art (i.e. calligraphy, sculptures, garden, jewellery, music and singing).

The art of calligraphy reply (beautiful writing) flourished in India from the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate. The patronage of the Mughal Emperors who encouraged it both as sisterly art to painting and for copying books of eminent authors, induced many Persian calligraphers to migrate to India. Calligraphy also formed an important factor in the training of princes and princesses. Hence many of the emperors were themselves good calligraphers. Babur invented a new style of writing in 1504 A.D. known
as the Baburi Khat. Along with others arts, calligraphy received grant encouragement and patronage from Emperor Akbar reign, of which the nastaliq was a special favourite of the empire Mohammad Husain of Kashmir who was conferred the entitle of Zarin-Qalam (or the gold pen). His son Mohammad Ali had a special skill in the Khat-i-Jalali. Aurangzeb himself acquired sufficient proficiency in penmanship. Aurangzeb’s hobby of the Quran is well-known. In his reign we find development of the Shikasta style side by side with the nastaliq.

The other forms of artistic activity was under the mughals was sculpture. During Jahangir’s reign, it was fully developed into People’s art. Further the Hathi-pol statues carved and erected at Ajmer, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Delhi fort respectively. It shows the keen interest of the Mughal’s cultural activities in different fields along with the patronage to worker class with awards.

The art of garden-building, which Babur brought with him to India and adopted by his Mughal successors. Its main characteristic was artificial irrigation in the form of channels, basins or tanks, and dwarf water falls, so built that the water brimmed to the level of the paths on either side; and the plan involved a series of terraces on sloping ground, usually numbering eight to correspond with the eight division of the Quranic Paradise, but some times seven, to symbolize the seven planets. The chahr-bagh (ground plan) of the Persian and Mughal garden was a square or rectangle, divided into a series of smaller squares or parterres, the whole ‘being encircled by a high wall with serrated battlements, pierced by a lofty gateway’. The
larger garden were usually provided with four gateways, and small octagonal buildings marked the angles of the outer walls. The garden of the Taj Mahal is based on the same four filled plot, but differs from other tomb gardens in having a beautiful marble tank in the centre of the plot instead of the tomb, which in this case stands at the end of the garden, overlooking the river. The mughal emperor, nobles and princess had indulged themselves to build many gardens at different places i.e. Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Kashmir, Multan and Sindh.

The manufacturing for jewellery as arts had grasped the mind of the mughals. The famous Kohinor diamond demand was always from Humayun to Aurangzeb. Many fine rubies and fine gems were under the Jahangir possessions. Jahangir’s jewels included one and a half maunds of unset diamonds, twelve maunds of pearl’s, two maunds of rubies, five maunds of emeralds, one maund of jaude, besides jewelled sword hilt’s, poniards, drums, brooches, cigarettes, saddles, lances, chair’s of state, flagon’s, winecus, charms and rings all these jewellery art’s were manufactured under the mughal’s karkhana. These all art shows as great beautiful vessels and cup of jade were collected by Jahangir and Shahjahan. Aurangzeb gave the importance to a large cup of rock crystal.

The cultural life in which Hindus and Muslims co-operated was music and singing. Akbar patronized Tansen of Gwaliyar who is credited with composing many new melodies (ragas). Jahangir and Shahjahan as well as many Mughals nobles followed this example. There are many stories about burial of music by the orthodox Aurangzeb but what is often
ignored is that he was veena player and during his reign, many books on music were written. There were numerous musicians at Mughal court - Hindus, Iranis, Turanis, Kashmiris, both men and women. The court musician's are arranged in seven divisions, one for each part of the day. Abul Fazl gives 36 singers at Akbar court.

Thus Mughal India (1526-1707) presents a picture of harmony in every aspects of socio-cultural trends. It was an age of enlightenment, advancement, peace and amity. Muslim-Hindu religious leaders, scholars, poets, artists, artisans, architects and musicians worked together in creating wonders in every art and made India a paradise on earth.