The urban society of northern India in the 17th century was divided into different classes according to profession, birth or social and political distinctions. The royal courtiers consisting of Hindu Rajas, nobles, high mansabdars and high government officials, including the top ranking merchants of the country, formed the uppermost strata of society in medieval times.

Bernier emphasises the comparative insignificance of the middle class in the 17th century and says, "There is no middle state...a man must either be of the highest rank or live miserably." But according to other contemporary sources one finds that there was a strong and prosperous middle class which was steadily growing. It was mainly dominated by commercial classes, which occupied an important position in the economic life of the period and were very influential. Besides the merchants, there were bankers, bullion merchants, money-lenders, jewellers, all of brokers and shopkeepers, who contributed to the economic life of the country. Then there were the members of the Mughul officials attached to different departments of government. Besides these, teachers, scholars, astrologers, priests, writers, copyists, calligraphists,

translators,¹ physicains², poets, musicians, master craftsmen and artisans³ formed a more numerous group.

The lower classes consisted of the working classes like weavers, artisans, and craftsmen such as blacksmiths, carpenters, cobblers, masons, stone cutters and ornamental sculptors⁴, domestic servants, slaves and soldiers⁵. Besides, there were the still humbler working class people such as washermen, dyers, barbers and tailors, camp attendants, hawkers and pedlars who constituted the lowest rung of the social ladder.

The aristocracy, the big merchants and the more well-to-do members of the professional classes, all lived in great comfort and luxury. Generally the nobles, according to the saying, "men follow the creed of their rulers", adopted the pattern set by the king. They lived luxuriously and loved pomp and show.

The middle class was well to do⁶ and a section which may be categorised as the upper middle class did not differ very much from other distinguished nobles in their standard of living. This class was temperamentally very orthodox and conservative and more frugal and

3. Ain, Vol. I, pp. 113 & 114. Abul Fazal mentions the ornamental artists, gilders, line drawers and pagers etc.
4. Pelsaert, pp. 60 & 77. See also Inayatkhan, Elliot, Vol. VII, p. 86.
5. Pelsaert, p. 61.
sober-minded, living in ease, but without ostentation or display. Not merely this, they adopted the means by which they might appear indigent.\(^1\) The lower classes were generally poor, living on their meagre income from day to day. According to Della Valle, "....for a simple servant, who is not an officer, commonly in the best houses, between wages, vituals and clothing, stands not in more than three Rupia a moneth..."\(^2\) Their standard of living was low, and they had no civic consciousness.

The upper classes lived mostly in the capital or other important provincial towns like Agra, Dihli, Lahore, Multan and Ahmadabad. Their residences were generally situated on the banks of a river,\(^3\) or outside the city or in a less congested area,\(^4\) where they also built the residences for their attendants and named that locality after their own names. "Nobles used to select plots for their palaces, and the houses of their attendants were built by the side of them. The whole block was called a 'pura', such as Akbarpura, Kalupura, Tajpur, Jamalpur, etc...."\(^5\)

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1. Bernier, p. 225. See also Pelsaert, p. 63.
4. Bernier, p.247. See also Tavernier, Vol.I, p.97, who speaking with reference to Dihli's residences says, "The greater part of the nobles do not live in the town, but have their houses outside, so as to be near the water."
5. Mirat, pp.10 & 11. See also Manrique Vol.II,p.220. The residence of Asaf Khan was situated outside the city in Lahore.
The houses of the upper classes were spacious and airy, and were pleasant and comfortable\(^1\), according to the social or political status of a person or his financial means.\(^2\) Houses were generally enclosed by a wall\(^3\), and the main residence was built on a high ground with flat open spaces on the top, where they used to sit in the summer to enjoy fresh air in the evening.\(^4\) Edward Terry speaking of Ahmadabad residences says, "Many of their houses are built high and flat on the toppe, from whence in the cool seasons of the day they take in fresh ayre."\(^5\) There was a portal at the entrance, where visitors were received\(^6\). The residences were very commodious and consisted of large halls and rooms for different purposes, and had several courts inside them.\(^7\) "The residences", says Pelsaert, "are noble and pleasant with many apartments..."\(^8\) Generally the houses were one storyed, though several storeyed houses were not uncommon. Edward Terry says, "In their upper roomes they have many lights and doores to let in ayre...."\(^9\). Similarly Manucci,

4. Pelsaert, p. 66. See also De Laet, p. 91.
5. Terry, p.21. See also Careri, p.247 and Thevenot,p.22.
7. De Laet, p. 91. See also Careri, p. 247, who says, "the great men have noble structures with several courts...".
8. Pelsaert, p. 66.
Brick and lime are very dear also, and one cannot build an ordinary house at less charge than five or six hundred livres for brick, and twice as much for lime. The houses are covered with tiles made half round... Canes which they call Bambous serve for lathes to fasten the tiles, and the carpenters work which supports all this is only made of pieces of round timber... ¹. Some of the houses were made of mud bricks, had canes and thatched roofs. These houses, with whitewashing etc., were turned into very lovely living residences. The residences of Agra, Dihli and Lahore were of stone², brick and lime, since these materials were procurable in abundance.

Terry speaking of Ahmadabadd says, "The materials of their best buildings are brick or stone well squared and composed..."³. The stones were carved which made the residences look magnificent. The roofs were of tiles⁴ as well as of thatch, but even they were well decorated and commodious⁵. The ceilings of their houses were adorned with carvings and paintings.⁶ The floors and the walls of the houses were plastered. The plaster was prepared by mixing lime with milk, gum and sugar.⁷ "When the walls have been plastered with lime",

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1. Thevenot, p. 22.
2. Manucci, Vol.III, p.41. He mentions the use of brick and mortar in their residences. See also De Laet, p.64, who says, "the more important edifices are built of brick or hem stone." And also B.N. Vol.II, p.597, and K.T. p.24.
3. Terry, p. 21.
5. Manucci, Vol.I, p.184. According to him the residences of upper class in Dihli were "highly decorated and commodious".
6. Conserrate, p.219. See also Bernier, p.247, who says, "The ceiling is gilt and painted."
7. Pelsaert, p. 66. See also Conserrate, p. 95.
says Pelsaert, "they apply the paste rubbing it with well
designed towels until it is smooth, then they polish it
steadily with agates, perhaps for a whole day, until it
is dry and hard, and shines like alabaster or can even
be used as a looking glass."\(^1\)

Glazed frames and bamboo curtains were used for
windows and doors. Coloured glass was rarely used as it
had to be imported. Manrique who visited the residence
of Asaf Khan in Lahore says with reference to his
residence, "Well lighted and extremely attractive, as it
was lighted all round by a series of casements fitted
with windows of different colours..."\(^2\) Similarly John
Fryer, mentions the use of painted glass\(^3\) in Surat, as
"they had usually folding doors, skreened with checks
or lattises, carved in wood, or Ising-glass, or more
commonly oyster-shells".\(^4\)

The houses were well furnished both for comfort
and display, and they reveal their high standard of living
and their love of display. The furniture was suited to
the climate and the customs of the country, and the inner
apartments were well furnished in the true oriental style.
The floors of the rooms and halls were covered with carpets.
The richness of quality and variety of the carpets depended

\(^1\) Pelsaert, p. 66.
\(^4\) Ibid, p. 231.
upon the status and the taste of the individual nobles.

Besides these, there were cushions in the room where they relaxed. The different travellers, who visited the residences of the upper class, in the different towns of the country corroborate this. Edward Terry mentions the floor of the houses being covered with excellent carpets, and couches for relaxation. Similarly Peter Hundy says, "The rooms in generall covered with carpetts with great round, high cushions to leane on (this well in publique as in private)". The carpets and cushions were decorated with gold and silver embroidery, and had different designs of brocade. Bernier too, gives a graphic picture of the inner apartments of the nobles thus. "The interior of a good house", says Bernier "has the whole floor covered with a cotton mattress 4 inches thick over which a fine white cloth is spread during the summer and a silk carpet in the winter. At the most conspicuous side of the chamber are one or two mattresses with fine coverings quilted in the form of flowers and ornamented with delicate silk embroidery interspersed with gold and silver (for the master of the house or man of quality). Each mattress has a large cushion of brocade to lean upon and there are other cushions placed round the room, covered with brocade velvet or flowered satin."

1. Terry, pp. 30, 34, 35. See also DE Laet pp. 81 & 91.

2. Peter Hundy, Vol. II, p. 218. See also Careri, pp. 247 & 248. See also Hanrique, Vol. II, who says about the residence of Asaf Khan in Lahore, "The floor... was entirely covered with rich and gaily coloured carpets."

the scorching heat of the country. 1 This system of laying gardens was started even in the times of Akbar. "The nobles erected pleasant homes and made charming gardens", says, Abul Faz 2.

Father Linserrate speaking about the residences of the rich says, "(They) plant ornamental gardens in their courtyards; make tanks and fishponds, which are lined with tiles of various colours; construct artificial springs and fountains, which fling showers of water far into the air; and lay down promenades paved with brick work or marble". 3 "A good house", says Bernier, "has its courtyards, gardens, trees, basins of water, small jets d'eau in the hall or at the entrance". 4 In their residences the running water was a most attractive feature, which made the residences cool and pleasant. Different sorts of fountains and baths were constructed, as early as the time of Babur in Agra. In his Memoirs Babur says, that he "....laid out regular and orderly gardens with tanks, made running waters also by setting up wheels..." 5.

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1. Bernier, p. 285, who says in the context of the residences in Agra of the upper classes, the "always made it a point to plant trees in their gardens and courts for the sake of shade the mansions of omrabs...". See also Terry p. 21, who gives a similar account of Ahmedabad, Jahangir too mentions the house of Itimad-ud-daulah as 'highly decorated bowers'. Tuzuk, Vol.II, p.183. See also Manucci, Vol. I, p. 70, who mentions of the cypress and other lovely trees planted in the gardens of their houose. Also see Tavernier, Vol. I, p. 393 who mentions 2 or 3 large courts and one or two gardens in them. See also Pelsaert, p. 66 and Terry, p. 34.
Similarly Pelsaert says, "There are usually gardens and tanks inside the house, and in the hot weather the tanks are filled daily with fresh water. . . . it flows through a leaden pipe and rises like a fountain..."1 Manrique, speaking of Asaf Khan's garden attached to his house in Lahore, says, "The most lovely park was watered by sweet clear water brought by numerous open channels, communicating with various reservoirs and fountains of these, some made attractive bathing places being enclosed in gilded and painted. Their houses contained all the amenities which were available in the country. To escape from the heat of the country they had cool rooms, covered with khas curtains and fans were fitted, pulled by the servants. Examine the remark of Peter Mundy in this connection, who says, "Men of qualitie in tyme of heat, have little roomes accomodated after that manner called Ckusse Connaes (Khas-Khana) where they sitt coole, having also a great artificiall fanne of linnen, which hangs downe from aloft and by pulling from without side, it swings forward and backward cause-ing a great deale of ayre within side."3

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1. Pelsaert, p. 66. See also Marshall, p. 70, who refers to the supply of water through the leaden pipes in the halls. Peter Mundy, Vol. II, p. 31.


3. Peter Mundy, Vol. II, p. 191. See also Bernier, p. 247 who too gives a similar account: "handsome subterraneous apartments which are furnished with large fans." The Khaskhanas were made of straw or odoriferous roots, placed near the reservoir of water, and were watered by the servants.
The contemporary travellers and chroniclers have given elaborate accounts of well laid out gardens in different towns. In Lahore the gardens of Jahdi Kasim Khan\(^1\) and Asaf Khan are worth mentioning. Asaf Khan's garden being "small, neat with walkers (planted with cypress-tree) divers tanks and Jouvens."\(^2\) De Laet mentions the garden of Abdur Rahim Khankhana at Burhanpur and says, "Two le^cae (league) from the city lies the park (Lal Bagh) of the great noble Chan Channae (Khan-i-Khan-an) the road thither is shaded by trees on either sides, in the park are most beautiful promenades and a square tank surrounded by a wall and shaded by trees."\(^3\) Pelsaert speaking of the gardens of Agra says, "Here the great lords far surpass our garden serve for their enjoyment, while they are alive."\(^4\) Some officers resided at Dihli in great enclosures, in which they had their tents pitched.\(^5\)

The houses of the middle classes were far inferior to those of the nobles in size as well as furniture and interior decoration. Merchants' residences in the large

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2. Finch, p. 56. See also K.T. p. 85 for other gardens of upper classes in Lahore.
4. Pelsaert, p. 5. See also Marshall, p.77. Hedges Vol. I, p. 42 and Bernier, p. 283. He mentions, the kings country house called Chah-limar at a distance of 2 or 3 leagues from Dihli.
Bernier says, "...many have a tolerable appearance very few are built entirely of brick or stone, and several are made only of clay and straw yet they are airy and pleasant... The tatched roof is supported by a layer of long handsome and strong canes, and the clay walls are covered with fine whitelime." Their residences were generally enclosed by a high wall to give privacy, and security.

The English factors, hired a fairly commodious and comfortable house in Patna city on Rs.6/12, which shows that rents could not to have been high. Such residences were however few as most of the middle class residences were small and congested and occupied by large families and their chattel. The residences of the merchants had courts and gardens and were quite commodious and well furnished.

The dwellings of the lower classes were humbler and made of very poor material with very little accommodation. Generally their dwellings were built with earth, straw, canes and were covered with palm leaves, thatch, reeds and such other material. Thevenot says that the houses of the "Commoner sort of people are but straw, containing but few people a piece." In Dacca houses

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2. William Finch, p. 52. See also DE Last, p.51.  
6. Thevenot, pp. 49. See also Finch, p.75 and Pelsaert, pp. 60 & 61.
were scanty and mean. The accommodation was so bad that in summer the masses had to sleep in theuts, as observed by Bernier, in Agra. While speaking the miserable condition of the labourers: Pelsaert clearly observes: "Poverty is so great and miserable the life of the people can be depicted or accurately described only as the home of stark want and the dwelling of bitter woe...Furniture there is little or none, t some earthware pots to hold water and for cooking, no beds..." ²

To suit India's climate dresses were made of stuffs. The dresses of the nobles were made of stuff and were of bright colours. Though the variety richness of the clothes differed from man to man, they used the most costly dresses.³ The chasa worn by the upper classes were of striped silk different colours, which reached up to their ankles.⁴

The shirts and the arcaluck⁵ and qaba⁶ were used in as, as the upper garments and were made of rich stuff embroidered with gold and silver lace. Thevenot qaba or chasa says, "the rich have very costly clothes. They are of cloath of gold, or other rich stuff, and lined with sables which cost very dear." ⁷ Mandelslo

Bernier, p. 240.
Pelsaert, pp. 60 & 61. See also Manucci, Vol. III, p. 41.
Della Valle, Vol. I, p. 44.
Rorty, p. 30. See also Thevenot, p. 50 & 51 and Della Valle, Vol. I, p. 43. Del Laet, p. 80 and also Careri, pp. 247 & 248. These travellers used the word breeches to mean churidar pajama.
It sort of long coat or gown. See Thevenot, p. 52.
Thevenot, p. 52. See also Della Valle, Vol. I, p. 43.
found Azam Khan, the governor of Surat, "clad in a white vestment over which there was another longer robe of brocade, the ground of it carnation, lined with white satin....".

In winter, the shawls, too were used and were draped around the shoulders. The shawls were pretty costly, and were obtained from Kashmir, costing sometimes as much as hundred and fifty rupees each. Over the upper garments men of upper class, fastened over their waist the lovely girdles of Persia, which were made of costly silken cloth. The nobles usually carried costly daggers tucked in their girdles. The use of headdress was very popular. The turban was the head wear and the Muslims especially attached importance to the headdress. Turbans were made of silk stuff called 'shakh', with gold and silver lace. It was of very delicate and fine fabric.

"The rich have them of so fine," says Thevenot, "a cloath, that five and twenty or thirty ells of it, which are put into a turban, will not weigh four ounces. They are dear and one single turban will cost five and twenty crowns. They, who affect a richer attire, have them mixed with

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1. Mandelslo, p. 34. See also Fitch, p. 110, who says in winter: "the men wear quilted gowns of cotton like to our mattresses...".

2. Bernier, p. 403. See also Thevenot, p. 52, who estimates the cost of the shawl as 25, 30 to 50 crowns.


5. Bernier, p.240, who says it was 'of the finest and most delicato materials'. See also Ianucci, Vol.III,p.38, according to whom they were 'of very fine gold stuffs'; Carcri, pp. 247 & 248.
gold; but a turban of that stuff costs several Toman... a Toman is worth about forty five French livers.\textsuperscript{1} In winter the quilted caps were used.\textsuperscript{2} The upper classes had a large stock of clothes and their wardrobes were well filled.\textsuperscript{3}

The wives and daughters of the nobles used the dresses made of costly stuffs.\textsuperscript{4} They changed their dress frequently. Manucci gives a clear picture of their aristocratic dresses thus. "They (ladies of the upper classes) are also obliged thereby to put on such exceedingly thin raiment that their skin shows through. They call these clothes siricae (sari) and others malmal (muslin). Ordinarily they wear two or even three garments each weighing not more than ounce, and worth from forty to fifty rupees each. This is without counting the gold lace that they are in the habit of adding. They sleep in these clothes, and renew them every twenty four hours, and never put them on again, but give them away to their servants."\textsuperscript{5} The upper class ladies also wore costly shawls during the winter round their head and shoulders.\textsuperscript{6}

The use of foot wear\textsuperscript{7} was common. The stockings or socks were not used, shoes being worn on naked feet.

\textsuperscript{1} Thevenot, p. 52. See also De Laet, p. 80. and Terry, p. 30, "The men's heads are covered with a long thinness wealth of cloth, white or coloured which goes many times about them, they call it a shahs."

\textsuperscript{2} Fitch, p. 110.

\textsuperscript{3} Manucci, Vol. III, p. 417.

\textsuperscript{4} Della Valle, Vol. I, p. 44. According to him these dresses, had the work of gold flowers.

\textsuperscript{5} Manucci, Vol. II, p. 341.

\textsuperscript{6} Bernier, p. 403, who mentions the value of shawls as hundred fifty rupees.

\textsuperscript{7} Della Valle, Vol. I, p. 43.
"No one, not even the king, wears stockings, the only cover for the feet babouches or slipper."¹ The shoes were made of leather and the upper part was sometimes covered with velvet², and leather³. The upper class adorned their costly slippers with gold work. Thevenot says, "The stuff they are made of is 'maroquin' or Turkey leather and they are much of the same shape as the papouches of the Turks, but the persons of quality have them bordered with gold..."⁴ Manucci estimated the cost of one slipper of the wife of Jafar Khan at fifty thousand rupees.⁵

The use of ornaments was very common both with men and women of the upper class. They adorned themselves with precious gems and ornaments. In fact, the value and richness of the ornaments depended upon their rank and wealth.⁶ Almost every part of the body, eat, nose, wrists, ankles, arms - was adorned with them. The arms were adorned with caskanets, and bracelets of gold, silver, ivory and set with precious stones. Flat rings of gold and silver were used as ear rings. According to Terry, ladies of quality are bedecked with many jewels, about their necks and wrists round about their ears are

¹ Bernier, p. 240. See also Terry, p. 30 and Careri pp. 247 & 248. See also De Laet, p. 280.
² Thevenot, p. 52.
³ Manucci, Vol. III, p. 38, who mentions shoes of velvet or of red leather.
⁴ Thevenot, p. 52.
"As a rule they have three or four wives, the daughters of worthy men... each wife has separate apartments for herself and slaves, of whom these may be 10 or 20 or 100 according to her fortune. Each has a regular monthly allowance for her qastos (expenditure) jewels, and clothes are provided by the husband according to the extent of his affection."¹ Similarly Careri portrays the luxury of the harem and says, "They spend all they have in luxury, keeping a vast number of servants, but above all of concubines. These being many every one of them strives to be beloved above the rest, using all manners of allurements, perfumes and sweet ointments".²

The upper classes engaged private officials to look after the different departments of their households such as treasurer³, chamberlains etc.⁴ They also maintained a large retinue of servants and dependents which consisted of servants, slaves, horses, camels and elephants⁵ etc., according to their means and status to show their authority and dignity, and this naturally entailed huge expenditure. Azam Khan's retinue consisted of "500 persons of whom 400 were his slaves, who were maintained in his house and transacted his affairs"⁶ besides 500 horses and 50 elephants.⁷ Mandelslo estimates the expenditure of

1. Pelsaert, p. 64. See also Bernier, p. 213.
6. Mandelslo, p. 32.
7. Ibid, p. 32.
the Governor Azam Khan, at about 5,000 crowns or 10,000 rupees a month, excluding the amount spent on the stables. Jafar Khan's bills for the herbs and vegetables only exceeded eighty thousand rupees a year.

Amongst the main items of expenditure may be mentioned the celebrations of marriages, annual festivals, social gatherings including feasts and parties organised by the upper classes, which were almost a matter of daily routine. Besides these the presents made to the king and royal family constituted a heavy drain on the resources of the nobles. "They (the nobles)" says, Bernier, "are expected to make a handsome present to the king more or less valuable according to the amount of their pay. Some of them indeed take that opportunity of presenting gifts of extraordinary magnitude....some presents fine pearls, diamonds, emeralds or rubies; other offer vessels of gold coins, each worth about a pistole and a half." Edward Terry referring to the feast of Mawrouz says, "There all his nobles assemble in their greatest pompe, presenting him with gifts, he repaying them again with princely rewards at which time being in his presence, behold most immense and incredible riches to my amazement in gold, pearls, precious materials.

1. Mandelslo, p. 32.
4. Bernier, pp. 271, where he considers the giving of presents to the king as the cause of the ruin. (nobles)
and plain velvet' on the path... for his reception, which was about half a Kos. Its value was estimated at 10,000 rupees. Besides it, the banquet-hall was furnished with costly tapestry and carpets worked with silken and golden embroideries, and cushioned with luxurious stuff. It was the national custom to eat on the floor, so they were decorated richly. Besides the usual furnishings of the hall, some extra arrangements were made in the banquet hall. On particular occasions the rich carpets of silk and silver and golden embroidery were spread to cover the floor. In addition to these furnishings, the seat of the chief guest was made luxurious with large beautiful cushions of golden cloth and upon them other smaller cushions of silver cloth were placed, while the 'dining floor' or the 'Dasterkhan' was made of the finest and whitest muslin.

In these social gatherings incense was burnt, which was composed of various confections of amber-gris' logwood and livet mingled with other odoriferous substances. There was lavish display of wealth on all festive occasions and the visit of the king was an occasion for special display. On the occasion for of the dinner given to Shahjahan by Azam Khan the courtyard was occupied by various men-at-arms. Similarly Mandelslo says that when

he was entertained by Asea Khan the Governor of Ahmadabad, "The room in which the refreshment was given was full of military officers some of whom stood on guard with half pikes in their hands, while others sat about a tank or reservoir which was in the room".1

A large number of servants2 attended such functions and lent colour and dignity to their masters. Matrons, maid-servants, bearers and eunuchs dressed in rich costumes were employed for serving the guests. According to Lanrique venerable matrons removed the flies, and other girls brought utensils for washing the hands of the guests invited to the party given to the emperor Shahjahan in Lahore by Asea Khan.3 The servants were, "richly attired in Indian style...with trousers of different coloured silks and white coats of the finest transparent muslin. These coats served to cover their dark brown skins, which disseminated the precious sweet smelling unguents, with which on this festive occasion, they were anointed".4 Lanrique was astonished and surprised to see some much polite usage and good order in practice5 Magnificent and costly vessels, golden

1. Landolato, p. 38. See also Nicholas Downton, p.153.
2. Roc, pp. 346 & 347. When Thomas Roe was invited by Jemuclein Hussein at Ajmer, he noticed that a company and one hundred servants were engaged by the noble.
3. Lrigious, Vol.II, pp. 216 to 219. Other female attendants dressed in rich and ceremonial dresses carried the vessels, towels, serving the dishes and presents to the king.
5. Lanrique, Vol.II, p.218. See also Roe, p.349 who speaks of the servants as 'delightful and respectful' while the service and order too were excellent.
dishes, and utensils were used on such occasions. "To bear these (rich vessels) there were in the four corners of the room as many stands; each of five tiers... all handsome and covered with Persian millques of gold and silver. Those thus acting as side-boards or buffets, were covered with numerous vessels of gold... in laid with precious stones the others in place of this had the finest and most brilliant enamel work, which while it varied as to material harmonised in colour". Then 'there were divers, large perfume holders and braziers of silver of wonderful workmanship ranged all round the hall'. The reception halls were tastefully decorated. At the entrance of the hall of Asaf Khan in Lahore 'stood attydre' with seven spouts. It was made of silver and was of exquisite workmanship and was ornamented.

Lent and rice were widely used and various sorts of bread varying with the occasion at the time of meals. Fruits, fresh and dried, pickles, and condiments were the usual accompaniment of every meal. Bernier mentions that Danishmand Khan spent 20 crowns on fruits for his breakfast. Different kinds of dishes were prepared from fruits. "Dishes of divers sorts, raisons, almonds,

1. [Name], Vol. II, pp. 213 & 214
pistachios and fruits\(^1\), were served in the party given to Roe by Jamaluddin at Ajmer. Manrique was astonished at the abundance and diversity of the dishes and eatables among which, some were in European style especially certain pastries, cakes, and other sweet confections made by some slaves who had been with the Portuguese... so admirably and delicately made that the Emperor (Shahjahan) was surprised at such novelties.\(^2\)

Tea and coffee\(^3\), iced drinks\(^4\), betels\(^5\) and intoxica\(^6\) were in common use. Perfumes of all kinds of flowers distilled essences rose water, and scented oils, were in great demand\(^7\). Ladies were fond of dyeing their hands and feet with henna\(^8\). At most of the festive parties dancing and singing by professionals was a common feature.\(^9\)

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3. Thevenot, Pt. III, Chap. XLVII, p. 81. According to him coffee and tea was used by Muslims. See also Della Valle, p. 365 and Hamilton, I, (New ed.) p. 119.
Hunting was a popular pastime, the common animals that were hunted being elephants, lions, buffaloes, deer and leopards. Hunting of lions, tigers, wild boars, greycocks was pursued with zest and enjoyment, as also elephant catching. Separate establishments were maintained for this purpose. Chaugan called polo was also an interesting recreation. It was played during the day as well as at night. Horse racing and dog racing were also popular.

Animal fights were very much in vogue. Goats, rams, cocks, quails, stags and antelopes were kept in large numbers for this purpose. Wrestling, boxing, Archery and fencing were common sports. Falconery (Kamarbarbasta) was common and various birds of prey

hawks like shahin Falcon, Jurjas\(^1\) and hasan\(^2\) etc. were trained for the purpose.\(^3\) Pigeon flying\(^4\) or isha-bazi
was very common and beautiful pigeons were imported from Iran and Turan\(^5\).

Indoor games were very popular with the upper classes and they especially took keen interest in them. Amongst the indoor games/most popular were/shooting of darts,\(^6\) chess\(^7\), chowar\(^8\), chandal and mendal\(^9\) and cards.\(^10\) These games were often played for stakes\(^11\). During 'Diwali', the dice was played and money was lost and won. Theatrical and puppet shows, physical feats by men and animals\(^12\), and jugglers' shows were very popular.

Various types of wheeled conveyances were used besides those in which male carrier and runners carried their masters or clients. Horses, elephants, palanquins\(^13\), dollis, chariots, coaches of European style, carts\(^14\).

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1. Male falcons.
2. A kind of hawk.
3. Thevenot, p.62. See also M.A. p.22. Though it refers to the royal recreations, but it was probably true also of upper classes.
10. Terry, p. 34. See also De Laet, p. 82 and also Ain, Vol. I, p. 318. Abul Fazl mentions that these were different games in the cards.
12. Terry, p.34. See also De Laet, p.82.
14. Bith, p.103, who says, "They have many fine carts and many of them carved and gilded with...two wheels...they are covered with silk or very fine cloth, and be used here as our coaches be in England."
and boats were used for going from one place to another.
Horses, mules, bullocks, olophants were used for riding.
The palanquins of different types, carried on the shoulders
of 6 or 8 persons, furnished luxuriously with quilts and
carpets and adorned with tapestries, were in common use.
John Fryer speaking in this context says, "... In their
palankeens, coaches, or swinging cots, which they affect
for ease are laid huge bolsterets of state, and quilts of
cotton to lie at length, their ceilings and posts are
hung with Nochaleyten, pintados, and adorned with other
gallantry". Bornier mentions the use of capacious
litters, suspended between two powerful camels, or
between too small olophants. Ladies used the doli or
Chundoulos which were built magnificently, painted and
cushioned inside, 'gilt and painted and covered with
magnificent silk nets of many colours and enriched with
embroidery, figures and beautiful tassels'.

According to Bornier the nobles maintain the
splendour of the court, and are never seen out of doors
but in the most superb apparel, mounted sometimes on an
olophant, sometimes on horse back and not unfrequently in
paltry, attended by many of their cavalry, and by a large
body of servants on foot, who took their station in front

1. Fryer, Vol. I p. 238. See also Bornier, p. 370 and
Potter Lundy, Vol. II, p. 189 and Thouenot, p. 46. See also
the luxurious Palanquins called 'Subhang' were used for
long travels which were very comfortable.
and at either side, of their lord, not only to clear the way but to flap the flies and brush off the dust with tails of peacocks; to carry the picquedent or spitoom, water to ally the Ommrahs thirst, and sometimes account books, and other papers. Similarly Thomas Roe says, "The great men ride in trains, some two hundred, some five hundred footmen following them, and four or five banners carried before them, and six hundred or two hundred horses after them."  

While the upper and middle classes were well off; and food and clothing along with other amenities of life were easily available to them, there was a sharp difference between their standard of living and that of the masses.

Different sections of the society celebrated family functions, like birth of a child, and festivals on a grand scale in which feasts and exchange of presents was a very common feature. On these occasions money was spent according to their means and status.

The wages were low and most of the labourers had to be contented with anything short of starvation. Some of them were so poorly fed as to make a traveller particularly notice their lean stomachs. Country made

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2. Roe, p.440. See also Peter Mundy, Vol.II, p.199 and also Manrique, Vol.II, p.186, who witnessed this sort of scene in Lahore, when the nobles went to attend the court of the king in such pomp that many had a following of over five hundred mounted men, irrespective of led horses, elephants and carts. See also Fryer, Vol. I, pp.235 & 242, Mandelslo, p.55, Careri, p. 243.
liquor was usually consumed by them. Pilgrimages and religious festivals were the only diversion as affording a respite from a strenuous and precarious existence. Mosques, temples, shrines and khangas were used for religious devotions and as educational centres.¹ The main means of conveyance available to the lower classes were bullock-drawn carts² or ponies and in some parts of the country camel carts were available. Edward Terry speaking in this context says, "The inferior sort of people ride on oxen, horses, mules, camels or Dromedaries, the women like the men, or else in slight coaches with two wheels."³

While the reckless expenditure on personal enjoyment and vain display of wealth was patent yet the upper classes were not lacking in generosity and contributed to charitable and religious endowments, patronised learning and arts and crafts and built public works of great utility. Edward Terry says, "For their marks of charity many rich men build sarraas, or make wells, where passengers may drink, or else allow pensions unto poormen that they may sit by the high way sides and offer water into those that passe".⁴ Peter Mundy speaks of the carvansarai, mosque and gardens built in Patna by the governor Saif Khan.⁵ Similarly the public works of

². Peter Mundy, Vol. II, 189. See also Careri p. 246 and Thevenot, p. 75. He also mentions of the chariot. See also Mandelslo, p.3.
³. Terry, p.33. See also De Laet, p.82 and Thevenot, p.73.
⁴. Terry, p.46.
⁵. Peter Mundy, Vol. II, p.159. See also Mandelslo, p.42, who mentions large number of gardens in Cambay with the monuments of the founder and open to by the public.
Shaista Khan have been mentioned in Masir-i-Alamgiri, which says, "the fame of his liberality and charity enveloped sky. His memorials are the many caravansarais and bridges which he built at the cost of lakhs all over Hindustan". Alone in Ahmadabad there were as many as about 500 mosques which were named after the builders. Beside these, they also built monastries in memory of saints, and other monuments and mausoleums. Thevenot says, in this context, "several great men having had the ambition to build their (sepulturies) in their own life time, or to erect monuments to the memory of their forefathers". In Lahore Wazir Khan, Sujan Singh and Abdul Hai, built charming resthouses, shops, bazars and caravansarais.

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They also helped education by granting stipends to the teachers, food and clothing to the pupils and building madrasas and patshahals. The upper classes, rich merchants and other well-to-do persons too were liberal with their charities and building or endowing works of public utility or religious and educational institutions. Beside temples mosques, sarais, gardens, wells, tanks, etc., hospitals were built for animals.

The high standard of living and lavish expenditure by the upper classes, as a matter of fact, directly or


2. Thovenot, p. 48.


5. Bernier, p. 336. He speaks about Benaras as 'Athens of India' which was maintained by the rich merchants.


7. Thovenot, p. 16. See also Careri, p. 165.
indirectly contributed to the growth of commerce, arts and crafts. It gave an impetus to industries and encouraged foreign trade, and also provided work and employment to a large section of the people. Musicians, astrologers, physicians, scholars along with the destitute and the indigent, the sick and the incapacitated had at least some section of the populace to fall back upon for support and maintenance. Some nobles invested money in banking. Mir Jumla and his son were actively engaged in commerce and financed others to carry on business\(^1\) on their behalf. Tavernier says, "For it is the principal trade of the nobles of India to place their money in vessels in speculations for Hormuz, Bassora, and Mocha and even for Bantam, Achin and the phillipines".\(^2\) It seems that this practice was more popular in the coastal towns and with the officers of the customs, who first came in touch with the traders of foreign companies.\(^3\) The upper classes lived in increased comfort and assuming an air of independence as well in great superfluity and absolute power\(^4\), and the splendour of their living did not lack in any way of raising their standard of living and to display their

\(^{1}\) Bernier, pp.16 & 17. He says that the wealth of Mir Jumla was early means of his extensive commerce with various parts of the world"... See also Bernier, p.195. Mir Jumla's son "Nisht-Emir-Khan, although nothing more than one of Aurangzeb's omras is so much respected in Golkonda, and chiefly in Maslipatam, that the teapotap, his agent or broker virtually acts as master of the port. To buys and sells, admits and clears out cargoes, free of any imposition and without any persons intervention." See also E.P.K. Vol.XI, p.61.


\(^{4}\) Felsaert, p. 60.
wealth and power. As Manucci speaking in this context says, they "live with such ostentation that the most sumptuous of a European courts cannot compare in richness and magnificence with the lustre beheld in Indian court."\(^1\)

In spite of their immense sources of income and ostentatious display of wealth the nobles were always in "embarrassed circumstances and deeply in debt" and few of them had either the incentive or the inclination to save and hoard up for their successors.\(^2\)

During this period, with the growth of commerce and industry the merchants, especially, of the coastal towns were becoming prosperous by making large profits. Viraji Vora, a Surat merchant was known as the 'richest man in the world' and his estate was estimated at 80 lakhs of rupees\(^3\). A Parsi merchant in Surat too was wealthy and acted as the commercial agent of the king of Bantam at Surat\(^4\). Shanti Das, a merchant of Ahmadabad, was one of wealthiest\(^5\) men of Gujrat. Sometimes the money was raised from these merchants for equipping an army.\(^6\)

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2. Bernier, p. 213.  
3. E.F.R. Vol. XI, pp. 303, 308 & 309. The factors mention the loss of Surat merchants incurred by Shivaji's attack. "The loss sustained by Viraji Vora was estimated at six tons of gold and that two other Hindu merchants suffered to the extent of thirty tons." The name of Haji Zaidi Beg too is worth mentioning. See also Thevenot, p. 22 & 290, Pelsaert, p. 42.  
5. Mandelalo, p. 23, who says he was, one of the wealthiest men of Gujrat in his day and high in favour both with Shahjehan and after him with Aurangzeb.  
The merchant class, was generally dominated by Hindus, "They (Baniyas) are all merchants and brokers, and so expert in business that hardly any body can be without them.... The richest merchants of the Indies are of them and such I have met in all places, where I have been in that country." Some influential merchants maintained their agents in different commercial towns. Virji Vora was the English Company's largest creditor in Surat and employed agents or vakils in Agra, Burhanpur, Ahemdabad etc. The shroffs acted as the bankers and the bills were accepted by them. At Baroch English Factors borrowed 4,000 Mahmudis from Rupji Surji and he was given a bill for Surat payable to Kuvarji Hari Das. Bills of exchange could be secured at Ahmadabad by the merchants and "Baniya shroff having their correspondents in all parts of Asia, as also at constantinople in Europe".

Unskilled labourers and small artisans and craftsmen were controlled by the middle classes who generally acted as middlemen for the procurement of goods and labour for Indian and foreign merchants. For

3. Ibid, Vol. II, p.110. It says, "The bills from Surat for 10,000 Mahmudis were received and duly accepted by the Shroffes on them they drawn".
4. E.F.R. Vol. II, pp.116, 163 & 329. In Cambay Jai Ram Sah furnished the goods worth Rs.21,649 to the English merchants and the other merchants, "Deo Vishna Das" furnished the factors with money on credit to be paid in some other towns.
5. Endololo, p.27.
protection and unhindered pursuit of commerce the
patronage and protection of some high official was generally
sought. According to John Fryer, "for a Banyan or
Richbroker to grow wealthy, without protection of some
great person," was an offence though, "merchants who
derive their income from king or from the omrahs, or who
are protected by a powerful patron, are at no pains to
counterfeit poverty, but partake of the comforts and
luxuries of life." Pelsaert remarks that the merchants
were, "subject to a rule that if the kings, nobles, or
governors, should require any of their goods, they must
sell for very little less than half price; for to begin
with, they must give great weight for small coins, the
differences being 20%, than 8% is deducted for dasturi,
the clerks, overseers, cashiers, and others all know very
well how to get their share"; "This statement is too sweeping" and should
be accepted with caution. Bribery and corruption
or highhandedness of officials were generally complained of but
the conditions were not worse than prevailing elsewhere
and the government did give redress when complaints
were made.

According to age old customs some trades and pro-
fessions were confined to particular families or classes.
Bernier says, "The embroiderer brings up his son as an
embroiderer, the son of a goldsmith becomes a goldsmith."  

4. Bernier, p. 259. See also Pelsaert, p. 60. Thevenot, p. 89.
   He notes the antiquity of the various
   professions amongst the lower classes.
It is however doubtful whether a guild system as was prevailing in Europe was in existence. ¹

The condition of lower classes was very deplorable and though they were nominally free they had to work hard, subsisting generally on starvation wages. We can accept the account of Bernier with some caution who speaking in this context says, "All those handy craftsmen come in the morning to those kar-kanays, and work there all day long and at night return to their several homes, every one passing his life quietly without aspiring above his condition". ² This class was generally exploited in numerous ways by the upper classes³ and Government officials⁴ like the Kotwal etc. Domestic servants could be hired for mere food and cloths⁵. Child labour too was very common⁶ which was available on nominal charges. However, the labourers, artisans, skilled craftsmen and servants, who were engaged by the state or some powerful noble, were better off.⁷

During this period exploitation of the lower class especially the weavers by the middle class (merchants) was also apparent. Bernier speaking in this context

¹. Ain, Vol. II, p. 44.
². Bernier, p. 259. See also pp. 224 & 228.
⁵. Thevenot, p. 60.
⁶. Thevenot, p. 55. See also Bernier, pp. 402 & 403.
says, 'If money be gained it does not in any measure go into his pocket (artisans) but only serves to increase the wealth of the merchants.'

A large number of religious men, devotees saints, mendicants, and fakirs lived in every city on the charity of the people which was readily forthcoming. People enjoyed religious freedom and were allowed to celebrate their festivals and perform religious rites and customs according to their tradition. The Hindus were free to celebrate their festivals, and functions at their own accord not only this much but the dead bodies too were allowed to pass from the city in music and procession.  

Hindu and Muslim ladies alike observed parda, but the Hindus were not so strict as the Muslims. They lived in the inner apartments and the houses were built in such a way as to give complete privacy to the womenfolk.