Chapter - VI

CONTRIBUTION IN SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND LITERARY SPHERES

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in India were marked by a heightened cultural activity as had not been witnessed in the past. Although much of this was due to the élan of the immensely gifted line of Mughal emperors who were known for their grandeur and opulence, a very substantial contribution came from encouragement and patronage provided to cultural and literary activities by the nobility as well.

The nobles were not just great military leaders and administrators but a highly cultured class that possessed tremendous creative ability. Since a very major part of the state income was distributed among the nobles, they had an enormous amount of wealth at their disposal, which apart from being spent in maintaining an ostentatious and pompous lifestyle\(^1\) was equally devoted to productive and useful work like contribution to charitable and religious endowments,\(^2\) patronizing scholarship and promoting various arts and crafts.

Mughal prime ministers by virtue of their position as leaders of the nobility contributed towards enrichment of socio-cultural life of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by financing madarsas, encouraging scholars, musicians and astrologers who looked upto them.


for patronage. Besides indulging in reckless expenditure on luxury and vain display of wealth, there is substantial evidence of their indulging in creative works of public welfare like building mosques, bridges and bazaars thereby providing employment to a large number of people directly or indirectly.

Since a fairly long period of rule as well as peaceful and settled conditions of government were essential for pursuance of such endeavours, Mughal Wazirs under Babur and Humayun are not known to have made any major contribution towards the development of sociocultural environment. However, Nizamuddin Khalifa, Babur's Wazir enjoyed the title of 'Hakim' meaning a wise person, philosopher or a doctor of medicine. Amir Khalifa was accomplished particularly in matters of medical knowledge and prescribed medicines to Babur and Humayun. Humayun's Wazir, Hindu Beg, an important minister under Babur as well is known to have built a mosque at Sambhal, one hundred and forty kilometres east of Delhi in 1526 A.D. The Sambhal mosque was the largest one constructed in the Delhi region since Timur's destruction of the city in 1398 A.D. It is the first extant Mughal building in India.

Culturally the most fruitful time in Mughal history was the reign of Akbar for its enriching accomplishments as well as the prospects it opened up. His prime ministers who were men of great ability, besides performing their military and administrative obligations to the state, also sustained their love for grandeur and indulged in cultural pursuits.

Bairam Khan, Akbar's Vakil-us-Sultanat from 1556-1560 A.D. (a Turk by race and a Persian by culture) was greatly skilled in poetry and found time to compose verses despite his brief yet eventful tenure as...
Babur’s Prime Minister. He composed brilliant odes and made insertions in the poems of masters. He collected these and gave them the name of ‘dakhliya’. He could compose both in Turki and Persian. The following panegyric by him is famous:

"Muhammad of Arabia who is the luster of the face of both
the worlds.

May dust cover the head of one who does not deem himself
to be the dust of his door."3

He completed a Diwan containing verses in both these languages. A ghazal composed by him has been translated into urdu by a scholar Mohammad Akhtar Muslim. The original Farsi ghazal is included in his Diwan.4 Infact his wife also had a poetical vein and wrote under the pen name of Makhfi (concealed).5

Bairam Khan was essentially a man of remarkable qualities. His genuine interest in learning made him patronize many poets. Badaoni writes:

"Learned men came from all parts of the world to visit him
and departed happy in the possession of gifts bestowed
by his hand as open as the ocean and his court as high as
the sky was the resort of the lords of learning...."6

Some of the poets who enjoyed Bairam Khan’s generosity were Hashim Qandhari and Hijaz Khan Badaoni.

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1 Sukumar Ray, Bairam Khan, p. 222.
4 Diwan-i-Bairam Khan, Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, 1971, p. 25.
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چھوٹی عبضہ کی جگہ کو خان دل کے دفاع کو جہاں کیا

زیادہ اور کہی کہ بہ احاس

بیہرم لیئے ہราม کیا

Urdu translation of Bairam Khan’s ghazal by Mohammad Akhtar Muslim
Whenever he was impressed by a couplet or a song read out to him he would offer a handsome reward.\(^1\) To Hashim Qandhari, whose ghazal he published as his own by rearranging the lines differently, he paid a lakh of tankahs.\(^2\) Although Badaoni has charged Bairam Khan with the blame that he acquired a ghazal from Hashim, Bairam was a poet of repute who had penned two Divans, one in Turki and the other in Persian. These were popular even in the later days of Akbar.\(^3\) The ghazal in question is remarkable as it depicts the state of affairs Bairam Khan was passing through. It mentioned that forty years of his service had been discarded and he was denied a meeting with Akbar and was running for his life. Who could have written such a ghazal but the one who was experiencing the misery reflected in it.\(^4\)

Great works were composed by scholars who enjoyed Bairam Khan's patronage. It was under his encouragement that Naziri Samarqandi took up the writing of Shahnama-i-Humayun.\(^5\) Mohammad Arif Qandhari, the author of Tarikh-i-Akbari', was also once in the service of Bairam Khan.

Bairam Khan was known for his humour and ready wit. Once when sitting in Humayun's presence he became inattentive, but impressed the emperor on being questioned, by saying:

"My king I have heard that when 'waiting upon princes
on should have heed to his eyes, and when serving

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\(^1\) To Hijaz Khan Badaoni, he gave a lakh of tankahs for a 'qasida' in which the 'maqta' was dedicated to him and made him supervisor of government of Sirhind, Badaoni, Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. II, p. 37.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 36
\(^3\) Ibid., Vol. III, p. 266. His verses are on every tongue. Abdul Baqi Nihawandi also says he had seen his diwan in the library of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan – it had two thousand shairs, Maasir-i-Rahimi, Vol. II, p. 61, vide Sukumar Ray, Bairam Khan, p. 240.
\(^4\) Munshi Debi Prasad Kayastha, Khan-i-Khanan Nama, Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi, 1990, p. 10
dervishes one should pay heed to his heart and in the presence of the erudite should guard his tongue and so I was thinking that as all three personalities were collected in your Majesty which of them I should observe."

Bairam Khan is known to have started the practices of ‘Komish’ and ‘Taslim’ in the Mughal court during the days of Akbar. These were usual presentation ceremonies at the Mughal court. Another contribution of Bairam Khan was the introduction of ‘Sarparda’, an enclosure round the tent better known as ‘Qanat’. These were in frequent use in India as well as in Iran.

Bairam Khan who enjoyed the reputation of being a military dictator par excellence and an unyielding administrator was not bereft of human virtues. The following Hukms of Bairam Khan prove that he was full of feelings of charity and kindheartedness. A Hukm of Bairam Khan dated 7th September, 1558 A.D. addressed to officials of Allahabad (Prayag) directs them to deliver possession of one thousand five hundred bighas of land situated in qasba Prayag to Sayyid Abdul Qadir as Muafi grant and orders them not to press him for a renewed sanad every year. On top of the Hukm there was a ‘Tughra’ of Akbar followed by the name of Bairam Khan. There were seals of Akbar and Bairam Khan as well. Another Hukm of Bairam Khan of

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2 Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, p. 299, Abdul Baqi Nihawandi also agrees that Bairam Khan played an active part in instituting the procedures of Kornish and Taslim. ‘Kornish’ consisted of placing the palm of right hand upon the forehead and head was bent forward. Taslim consisted of placing the back of right hand on the ground and then raising it gradually until the saluter stood erect when he puts the palm of the hand upon his head.
3 Sukumar Ray, Bairam Khan, p. 232.
4 ‘Hukm’ was an edict of either the queen mother or the Royal consort, but it was a privileged order also of Khan-i-Khanan during the reign of Akbar as is borne out by the orders of Bairam Khan and Munim Khan who had the honour of issuing hukms, though they could, as a rule, issue Parwanches only.
Bairam Khan talking to Tardi Beg Khan in front of colourful tents and saraparlas. Saraparlas were first introduced by Bairam Khan (Akbar-nama 26203, Dept of Oriental Manuscripts, British Library).
October/November 1558 A.D. grants two hundred bighas of land to a saint Shaikh Gadabanda for maintenance. It bears Bairam Khan’s seal.1

Mughal emperors, with the exception of Aurangzeb, and their nobility were keen patrons of music which was valued as a source of aesthetic fulfillment and spiritual bliss under Akbar. Bairam Khan set the tone for promotion of music by taking into his service Ramdas, a gifted musician from Lucknow, who had served in the court of Salim Shah and whom Badaoni describes as ‘a second Miyan Tansen’. This man who was Khan-i-Khanan’s intimate companion often brought tears into Bairam’s eyes by the melody of his voice. 2 Bairam Khan once rewarded him with one lakh tankahs even though his treasury was empty at that time.

Although Akbar is applauded for his natural inclination towards religious toleration, Bairam Khan’s role in shaping his ideology during formative years of his adolescence cannot be ignored.3 Bairam Khan’s having been labelled a staunch Shia has been questioned by some historians.4 However, his action of placing Shaikh Gadai, a Shia, at the head of a vast Sunni majority is hard to defend. Akbar’s disapproval of it by enlisting himself as a disciple of Shaikh Ghaus, the most respected Shia saint of the times and paying him a visit at Gwalior also proves the point. Whereas eighteenth century chroniclers like Khaﬁ Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan write of his sectarian bias (ta’ā

1 Indian Historical Records Commission. XII, p. 161., S.A. I. Tarmizi, Mughal Documents., 1989, p. 154, 155.
4 Iqtidar Alam Khan believes that there is contemporary evidence to prove that he was above sectarian bias and did not attach much significance to the Shia-Sunni rift. Some of the Turani nobles, most of whom must have been Sunnis, continued to support Bairam Khan throughout his Regency. “The Mughal Court Politics during Bairam Khan’s Regency”. Medieval India - A Miscellany, Vol. I, Aligarh, 1969, p. 35.
Badaoni has labelled Bairam Khan as a Tafzeeli. Akbar’s first Prime Minister does deserve some credit for a secular outlook adopted by his master in his later years.

Maham Anagah, Akbar’s nurse and virtual Prime Minister immediately after he disengaged himself from Bairam Khan’s overbearing influence, was a cultured lady who considered it a great service to impart education and spent a lot of money for this cause. She established a Madrasa at Delhi which was attached to a mosque called Khair-ul-Manzil in 1561 A.D. In this way the absence of state sponsored education system was to some extent compensated by the establishment of these institutions by members of the ruling elite.

Maham Anagah also displayed style and élan as is revealed by her fondness for arranging banquets. In 1561 A.D., she arranged a magnificent banquet on the occasion of her son’s marriage. The same year she arranged another great entertainment event in which many ladies participated. Maham Anagah also took active interest in arranging negotiations for matrimonial alliances. She played an active role in furthering marriage negotiations of Bairam Khan and Salima Sultan Begum. She also negotiated the marriage of her elder son Adham Khan to the daughter of Baqi Begum.

From the beginning Akbar’s fascination for architecture was echoed by the nobility who made a substantial contribution in giving it

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1 Tafzeeli is a sect in Islam among the Sunnis who believe that Hazrat Ali was the fourth in position as Khalifa but prefer him as first in virtues and qualities. Sukumar Ray, Baidram Khan, p. 234.
3 Abul Fazl, Akbarnama, Vol. II, pp. 204-205.
5 Nizamuddin Ahmad, Tabaqat-i-Akbari, Vol. II, pp. 204-205.
6 Ibid., p. 251.
Hashul-Hokm issued by Muni'im Khan Khan-i Khurran in Safar 974 [July/August-September 1566 A.D.]
Reverse of Hash al-Hakim issued by Man'um Khan Khan-i Khanan in Safar 974
H/August-September 1566 A.D.
A HASB UL-HUKM ISSUED BY MUN'IM KHAN.

A hasb-ul-hukm issued by Mun'im Khan dated, Safar 975 H/August-September 1566 A.D.

On the direction of Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar Badshah Ghazi,
Order by Khan-i-Khanan Muhammad Mun'im Bahadur.

Hakims, diwans, amils and other officials of pargana Bhojpur of sarkar Agra may know that twenty bighas of land under cultivation and fifty bighas of fallow land in the village Sarwarpur belonging to tappa Maipur, a division of the above pargana, is granted to Qazi Alam as madad mash.

This land may be given in the possession of the aforesaid qazi from the beginning of the kharif (autumn harvest) of Pars Yil, so that he may acquire the revenue from that land and use it for his maintenance. He and his cultivators should not be asked to pay mal-o-jihat (land revenue) and sair-ikharajat and all the other demands of the diwani (the revenue department) such as qunlagha (gift made by a zamindar while paying visit to a hakim), peshkash (cash offering), sa'iri (payment for the staff of the revenue collector), jaribana (measurement fee), zabitana (assessment fee), muhrana (payment for seal), sad-doi-i-qanungoi (share of the muqaddam), takrar-i-zara'at, harj kharch (miscellaneous charges), adwab (cesses), jiziah (poll tax on non-Muslims), muhtarifa (taxes on artisans), laughana (fine for disobedience) etc. No one should be allowed to interfere with the lands of the aforementioned. It is their (the officials) responsibility. The instructions in this regard should be considered by them as binding.

Seal
Muhammad Mun'im, entitled Kahn-i-Khanan

Written in the month of Safar 974 H.
an ever broadening base in terms of construction and patronage. Munim Khan, Khan-i-Khanan who enjoyed two tenures as Akbar's Vakil-us-Sultanat and was also governor of Jaunpur was a talented person. Most of Munim Khan’s creative work was in the city of Jaunpur which was extensively remodelled by him after its destruction during the time of the Lodhis.\(^1\) Being a deeply religious man, he constructed a number of mosques in the city. A khanqah and a few shops were attached to the mosque built in memory of Shah Shaikhu, a well known saint. The fact that the income from these shops was spent on the maintenance of the students studying in the madarsa of the mosque proves his commitment to the welfare of the needy.\(^2\) Munim Khan also constructed a mosque named Masjid-ud-Da’wat. This mosque was situated on the bank of the river Gomti. There is evidence to suggest that certain mosques like ‘nawab Mohsin Khan ki masjid’ and an idgah were constructed by persons who enjoyed his patronage.

The most famous of Munim Khan’s architectural contributions is the bridge over the Gomti.\(^3\) According to the Persian history of Jaunpur, it was constructed by Munim Khan in response to a discourse by Akbar in which he, hearing a widow complain about the lack of ferry service across the Gomti proclaimed that it is better to provide public works than religious edifices.\(^4\)

Munim Khan was generous as far as giving grants for religious causes were concerned. There is a *Hasb-ul-Hukm* issued by Munim Khan in August 1566 A.D. bearing his seal, ordering twenty bighas of

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\(^1\) Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p. 87.
land under cultivation and fifty bighas of fallow land in village Sarwarpur\(^1\) be given to Qazi Alam as madad mash so that revenue of this land may be acquired for his maintenance and he should be free from paying 'mal-i-jihat' (land revenue) and sair ikhrajat\(^2\) and all the demands of the Diwani (the revenue department).

Keeping in time with the lavish and pompous lifestyle of the Mughal nobility Munim Khan was also known to have been fond of arranging parties and banquets. Despite certain flaws in his character Munim Khan, a Sunni, was seemingly above sectarian prejudices (ta'assub) which is proved by the fact that Ali Quli Khan who was known for his Shia beliefs was amongst Munim Khan’s closest friends.\(^3\) Therefore, it is not unreasonable to imagine that the contribution of these early counsellors of the emperor to his natural inclination towards religious tolerance was substantial.

Atka Khan enjoyed a very short but significant tenure as Vakil. A very loyal and devoted servant of the Mughals he served the emperor very selflessly. He possessed poetic genius. Badaoni remarks, although his dignity is too great to be described as a poet, he composed the following verses:

"My little tear set not thy foot forth
from the house of my eye
for well born children have the house but seldom"

Another verse by Atka Khan is quoted by Badaoni:

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1 No village of this name is traceable now. Probably some time in the eighteenth or nineteenth century the village came to be known as Shaikhupur named after the Farooqi zamindars and land holders living there. Iqtidar Alam Khan, Political Biography of a Mughal Noble Munim Khan, Khan-i-Khanan, p. 124.

2 In the revenue accounts given in the manuals and elsewhere, the Jama is equally divided into mal-i-jihat and sair-o-jihat. The former comprising land revenue and the latter other taxes. Irfan Habib, Agrarian System of Mughal India., p. 243.

3 Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'Akbar's Personality, Traits and World Outlook - A Critical Reappraisal' in Irfan Habib, ed., Akbar and His India, p. 81.
Akbar receiving Mirza Sulaiman's envoy at a banquet given by Munim Khan in January 1561
If the full moon in her glory
should boast over the sun of the face.
She will at least sink down
from the turquoise sky invented.¹

Muzaffar Khan Turbati, Akbar’s Divan and later Vakil-us-Sultanat not only possessed a sound knowledge of financial affairs but was fond of style and grandeur. He built a beautiful mansion for himself in Agra, which received a lot of acclaim on account of its beauty and decoration.² He was fond of entertaining in style and Akbar is said to have honoured him in 1572 A.D. by visiting his haveli.³ Muzaffar Khan is known to have built a Jami Masjid at Agra. The masjid, now in ruins, is still known as Nawab Muzaffar ki Masjid or Kali Masjid.⁴

Raja Todar Mal was one of the most remarkable Hindu officers in Akbar’s service and the most striking instance of upward mobility of deserving individuals in their professional careers during the reign of Akbar. A consummate scholar of Persian, Todar Mal is credited with the Persian translation of the ‘Bhagwat Purana’. Several scholars produced works of great social and cultural significance under his patronage. The sixteenth century saw a general decline in standards of Hindu practices and customs. A scholar named Nilkantha produced a voluminous work on judicial procedures, auspicious time for marriages, religious ceremonies, on law and medicine and named it ‘Todar Nanda’. Another work entitled ‘Todar Prakash’ by a distinguished scholar Raghunandan Misra was also written under his patronage.⁵

Todar Mai is known to have been the patron of a poet called Alam who wrote ‘Madhavanala Kamakandala’ which has been ignored by scholars as an important source material because of its lack of historical bearing, but it does reflect historical events and socio-cultural developments of Akbar’s time. It is dedicated to Akbar and Todar Mai and was completed in 1582-83 A.D.

Todar Mai was predisposed towards charity. It was at his suggestion that daily distribution of charities at the doors of the royal palace was started. He believed and even suggested to other members of the nobility that amirs should take care of the empty handed atleast once a week. At his recommendation, thousands of prisoners of war were released and provided with employment in government offices thereby performing a great social obligation. They were designated as chelas (desciples) of the king. His concern for the helpless and the needy has been emphasised by later historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Tabatabai.

Varanasi had been an important centre of learning from ancient times but had suffered from neglect at the hands of Sultans of Delhi and many scholars consequently migrated to the Deccan. Todar Mai and his son Govardhan Das are reported to have helped Akbar in the efforts to restore it to its previous place as the centre of ancient learning and culture. Abul Fazl remarked “Crowds of people come to it from the most distant parts for the purpose of instruction to which they apply

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4 Ibid., p. 255.
5 District Gazetteer of Banaras, pp. 190-191.
themselves with the most devoted assiduity". Foreign travellers like Bernier also noted the importance of Benaras as a great seat of learning and called it the “Athens of India.”

A major cultural development in India during the Mughal age was the dissemination of Persian language throughout the empire. Though it had been the language of administration, earlier it had essentially been used by the ruling elite. Todar Mal’s greatest contribution towards socio-cultural development was the ordinance issued by him making the knowledge of Persian compulsory for all servants of the empire. Todar Mal had the farsightedness to comprehend the binding effects of a common language. Till now the non-muslims had not shown keenness in learning Persian, which led to their practical exclusion from imperial transactions. Todar Mal induced his co-religionists to take up the study of the language through a very convincing propaganda. By doing this the minister was responsible for initiating a process of social fusion and cultural integration that is characteristic of Akbar’s reign. Scholars believe that Todar Mal’s ordinance making the knowledge of Persian compulsory led to the development of a new literary medium in the form of Urdu which came to be called Hindawi.

Abdur Rahim, Khan-i-Khanan, son of Bairam Khan who was appointed Vakil-us-Sultanet by Akbar in 1590 A.D. was a great scholar, unequalled in respect of literary and cultural accomplishments. He was a scholar of many languages. Abul Fazl writes that Abdur Rahim was a verstatile man who composed in Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and

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1 Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. II, p. 158.
2 Francois Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire, pp. 334-335.
3 Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, p. 371, Urdu a hybrid Indo-Persian language was originally a language of military camps. The term Urdu is derived from the Turki word Ordu meaning military camp but it rapidly evolved into a distinct language using Persian script, Hindi syntax and a predominantly Persian and Arabic vocabulary mixed with a few Indian words.
The entire period appears deeply permeated with the spirit of poetry as a result of the unparalleled recognition it got from men like Abdur Rahim, who despite his constant employment in administrative affairs, found time to indulge in writing verses and collected a large Diwan of his poems.

Abdur Rahim held assemblies that were attended by learned men and poets. Many Persian poets such as Rasmi Qalandhari and Kausari remarked that in that age there was no such good purchaser of words as the Khan-i-Khanan. Poets like Jamal ud din Muhammad Urifi (1556-1591 A.D.), the most famous and popular poet of his century, received handsome rewards from him for his poetic talents. It is said that Abdur Rahim used to give him so much money that he did not have to knock at any other person's door.

Abdur Rahim got a poet Naziri of Nishapur weighed in gold. Once Naziri desired to see a heap of one lakh silver coins. The Khan-i-Khanan arranged the money and sent it to him as a reward. Mulla Shaida, another renowned poet who migrated to Delhi was also patronized by Abdur Rahim. Some other poets who found a patron in Abdur Rahim were Shakibi of Isfahan who wrote elegant verse:

“Oh God! Send me from heaven a market for my wares,
I am selling my heart for a sight of my love; send me a buyer”

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2. *Maasir-i-Rahimi* by Muhammad Abdul Baqi Nihawandi includes accounts of all those scholars and poets who flourished under the Khan's patronage.
3. Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, *Dhakhirat-ul-Khawanin*, Part I, p. 44. Urifi had attached himself to Abdur Rahim after the death of his former patron Hakim Abul Fath. His diwan consists of seventy six qasidas, two hundred and seventy ghazals and seven hundred qilas and quatrains. It was compiled in 1598 A.D.
Another poet by the name of Urfi of Shiraz who was initially attached to Shaikh Faizi, served Abdur Rahim, Khan-i-Khanan and made great progress. However on account of self admiration he lost his patron's favour.

Abdur Rahim was one of the most celebrated poets of Hindi in Akbar's court and one of the foremost in the whole country.\(^1\) His command over the bhasha was not less than that of Tulsidas and is often called 'Poorna Kavi'. His verses in fine and simple words were very appealing and always carried a message. Infact no history of Hindi poetry can be completed without reference to the contribution of his verses.\(^2\) His well known works are 'Rahim Dohawali', 'Barvai Nayika Bhed', 'Shringar Sorath', 'Rahim Ratnavali' etc. Of all his compositions his Dohavali is the most popular. He is said to have written seven hundred Dohas.\(^3\) Sant Tulsidas writer of 'Ram Charit Manas' was also patronized by the Khan-i-Khanan. Tulsi Das's Ramayan was written in Barvai couplet which was an innovation of Rahim.

Besides his knowledge of Hindi, Abdur Rahim also used a local dialect 'Braj'\(^4\) spoken in the neighbourhood of Agra as a means of expression of his ideas\(^5\) and is said to have read out poems to Akbar in this language.\(^6\) Abdur Rahim's efforts to produce a synthesis of bhakti

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\(^3\) C.R. Naik, \textit{Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan and his Literary Circle}, p. 244.

\(^4\) Most of the lyrics sung in the vocal art music of the period were composed in Braj. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, \textit{Indo Aryans and Hindi}, Calcutta, 1960, p. 200. He says if any Indo Aryan language could be labeled as a badshahi boli in North India it was certainly Braj Bhakha (bhasha).


\(^6\) Francoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, "The Image of Akbar as a Patron of Music in Indo-Persian and Vernacular Sources" in Irfan Habib, ed., \textit{Akbar and His India}, p. 211.
poetry with Persian ideas of life and human relations led to Persian and Hindi literary conventions influencing each other to a great extent.\(^1\)

It is rather surprising that the liberal minded Khan-i-Khanan who was alive to the devotional charm of Hindi verse came under the influence of Khwaja Baqibillah, the head of the Naqshbandi order that initiated the Islamic reaction against Akbar’s heresy.\(^2\)

The scholar courtier Khan-i-Khanan possessed a grand and rich library.\(^3\) Although we do not know the exact number of volumes he possessed, but the fact that it required a staff of ninety calligraphers, gilders, book binders, painters, cutters and illuminators to undertake the work speaks for itself.\(^4\) There is a reference of Mulla Muhammad Amin of Kashan who was superintendent of this library drawing a salary of four thousand rupees per month. Two illustrated manuscripts from the Khan-i-Khanan’s library are known to us – one is the ‘Khamsa’ of Amir Khusrau (preserved at the Staas Bibliothec, Berlin) and the other manuscript is the ‘Ramayana’ (preserved at Freer Gallery of Art, Washington) which contains 130 paintings.\(^5\) From the comments in the handwriting of Abdur Rahim, on the fly leaf of the manuscript of Ramayana, it appears that in 1598-99 A.D. Mulla Shakibi Imami was in charge of the illustration work at his library. Abdur Rahim’s atelier was part of the establishment of his library and was organised on lines resembling those of the imperial studio. Jahangir refers to the valuable

\(^1\) Satish Chandra, Medieval India from Sultanat to the Mughals, Part II, Mughal Empire, 1526-1748, p. 444.
\(^2\) Aziz Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture, O.U.P., New Delhi, 2000, p. 182.
\(^3\) S.A.Z. Nadvi, “Libraries during the Muslim Rule in India,” Islamic Culture, October 1945, pp. 18, 39.
offering of an illustrated manuscript of 'Yusuf and Zulaikha' made to him by the Khan-i-Khanan.1

Abdur Rahim, Khan-i-Khanan, who mastered Persian and Turkish was acclaimed for his ability at translation. He translated Babur’s memoirs written originally in Turkish into Persian.2 Out of the several translations of Babur’s memoirs the one done by Abdur Rahim is the most complete. Akbar applauded the Khan-i-Khanan for it3 and ordered the court painters to illuminate the Khan-i-Khanan’s manuscript.4 The Khan-i-Khanan also had the expertise of translating court documents from Persian to Hindi at sight. He was unsurpassed in ‘insha’ (diplomatic correspondence) and once drafted a letter of introduction for Akbar’s ambassador to the court of Abdullah Khan Uzbeg, ruler of Khurasan that was highly acclaimed at the Uzbeg court.5

Abdur Rahim had a fondness for architecture and his interest in this medium of artistic expression was aimed at turning “Hindustan into Iran”6 When Lahore assumed importance and virtually served as the Mughal capital between 1584-98 A.D., the Khan-i-Khanan constructed a number of buildings, sarais and shelters for the poor and needy. Abdul Baqi Nihawandi wrote, “when weary travellers put up in

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1 The manuscript was prepared by Mulla Mir Ali in a beautiful binding and was worth one thousand muhrs. Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Vol. I. p. 168.
the sarais they forget the difficulties undergone by them on rough roads and here their properties were quite safe".1

Among his contributions are the significant works of architecture at Burhanpur which became the headquarters of the Mughals after the conquest of Khandesh in 1601 A.D.2 Burhanpur still has a system of irrigation through underwater pipes called 'qanats' which was laid by Abdur Rahim. These 'qanats' served the useful purpose of bringing water from the foothills of the Satpura range to the town.3 He started the construction of hamams (Baths) in Persian style in India. He was the first to build such hamams for the poor public including the beggars and faqirs.4

The gardens laid out by Abdur Rahim, were known for their beauty. European travellers appreciated the beauty of Fath Bagh and Lal Bagh, two of his famous gardens. Mandelslo, a German traveller who visited Fath Bagh in October 1638 A.D. considered it amongst the best in the country. 5 This garden, built in commemoration of his victory over Muzaffar Khan III of Gujrat was laid along the side of the Sabarmati river at a place called Sarkhej and was spread over an area of one hundred and twenty Jaribs.6 Jahangir a connoisseur of beauty was greatly charmed by its elegance and remarked that in the whole of Gujrat there is no garden like this. 7

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3 Ibid., p. 91.
4 H.K. Naqvi, Urbanization and Urban Centres under the Great Mughals. ., p. 29; Munshi Debi Parsad Kayastha, Khan-i-Khanan Nama, p. 50.
5 M.S. Commisariat , Mandello’s Travels in Western India., pp. 47-48.
Lal Bagh was also a manifestation of the Khan-i-Khanan’s love for natural beauty. In the middle of this garden was a deep pond constructed over forty thousand square yards with channels intersecting each other at right angles on all four sides. Artificial waterfalls were created in these channels. The two mile route leading to the garden from Burhanpur was planted with shady trees. The fact that the Khan-i-Khanan threw it open for the public (Khas-o-aam) added to its appeal. The Khan-i-Khanan’s love for architecture is reflected from the fact that his widow also laid out a garden, a tank and some houses in memory of her husband after his demise.

Abdur Rahim is also acclaimed for the patronage provided to painters, illuminators and calligraphists. The Maasir-i-Rahimi mentions the names of five painters – Bahbud, Madhu, Mawlana Ibrahim Naqqash, Mawlana Mushfiq and Miyan Nadim who enjoyed his patronage. Some of these names appear to be identical with those working for the imperial atelier proving that it was possible for artists to move from one atelier to the other. The two illustrated manuscripts from Abdur Rahim’s library – the ‘Khamsa’ of Amir Khusarau and the ‘Ramayan’ contain paintings attributed to twelve painters from different communities who worked together in his library.

Abdur Rahim was very generous in rewarding artists. Maulana Ibrahim Naqqash who was deprived of the Khan-i-Khanan’s service, travelled throughout the empire in search of a patron like him but did not get any and later repented his mistake. Abdur Rahim was also very fond of charity. He used to send thirty thousand rupees to Shah

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1 Ebba Koch, Mughal Architecture - An Outline of its History and Development 1526-1858, p. 92.
Musam-ud-din, a saint at Delhi, as expense aid. At nights he used to visit the house of darwishes and give them unsolicited money (Futuh).

The impetus given to the cause of learning and scholarship by him was tremendous. He also added to the magnificence of the Mughal court by his encouragement and promotion to various arts. His sympathetic interpretation of Hindu thought, religion and culture through the medium of poetry endorses his contribution towards the cultural integration that is distinctive of Akbar's reign.

Mirza Aziz Koka, the last to hold office of Vakil under Akbar was a well-bred man known for his accomplishments. Akbar's, playmate and foster brother Aziz Koka was unmatched in sharpness, intelligence and fluency of speech. He also possessed exceptional knowledge of history.

A learned man, Aziz Koka had the talent to compose verse. The following is the translation of a verse composed by him:

"since honour and reputation prevented me
from obtaining the desires of my heart,
I will henceforward shatter my reputation with a stone".

He also wrote an illuminated copy of an ode composed by himself, the opening couplet of which was:

"Oh thou whose curled lock is the fetter of my heart,
The love of whom is mingled with all the elements of my body!"

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1 He was the son of Ghazi K. Badakhi a leading noble of Akbar and was married to Abul Fazl's sister and had become a Darwish. Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, Dhakhirat-ul-Khawanin, p.195; Jahangir, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Vol. I, p. 166.

2 Akbar used to say, "Between me and Aziz there is the link of a river of milk which cannot pass away"


"As I've not got happiness from name and fame
After this I'll throw a stone at fame's mirror."
Aziz Koka promoted the cause of learning by patronizing a number of scholars who had a good knowledge of poetry. A poet by the name of Haidari of Tabriz who came to India from Iraq thrice and received great magnanimity at Akbar’s court was patronized by Mirza Aziz Koka who paid him two thousand rupees for an Ode. Another poet by the name of Sahmi grew up in the service of Mirza Aziz Koka. Two other poets, Mudami of Badakshan and Muqimi of Sabzavar also received encouragement from Aziz Koka and served under him for some time.

Aziz Koka was a pupil of Muhammad Baqir and Mulla Mir Ali and according to some critics he was in no way inferior in elegance and competence to his masters. He also possessed enormous amount of ready wit. The following aphorism is often quoted from his sayings:

“A man should marry four wives – a Persian for companionship, a Khurasani for house-keeping, a Hindu for nursing his children and a woman from Transoxiana to have some one to whip as a warning for the other three”.

Mirza Aziz Koka expressed his fondness for architecture by designing his mausoleum during his life time. His tomb remains the finest building of Jahangir’s time in Delhi. Constructed of white marble the tomb is known popularly as ‘Chausath Khamba’ after the sixty four pillars that divide it internally into twenty five bays. The tomb

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2 Ibid., p. 302.
3 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 336. He chose his poetical name from the profession of his father who was an arrow maker. The Ain-i-Akbari and Tabagat-i-Akbari do not mention his name.
7 Catherine B. Asher, Architecture of Mughal India, p. 141.
is an illustration of the transition from Jahangir's time to the style associated with Shah Jahan's period.

Aziz Koka's fondness and appreciation for painting is revealed from his getting his house in Agra painted by the head of Akbar's painting atelier Abdul Samad. He once told Muhammad Sharif:

"... What love your late father Mulla Abdus Samad Musawir showed me! all these pictures and paintings that you see in this private chamber (Khilwat Khana) were made by his august hand".

Aziz Koka was a strict Sunni, who fanatically clung to the rigid practices of Islam. Along with some others he questioned Akbar's desire to be a religious guide and accused him of putting Faizi and Abul Fazl in the place of Osman and Ali. He resigned as governor of Gujrat and left for Arabia writing a harsh letter to Akbar who, he felt, had turned against Din-i-Muhammad (Islam) quoting a verse from Sadi:

"One who takes the road opposite to that of the prophet would never reach his destination".

He, however, had a bad experience at Mecca and returned to the court and enlisted himself as a member of Din-i-Ilahi.

The fine art and architecture of the Mughals had been well cultivated by the time Jahangir ascended the throne; but they were to...

1 Son of the famous painter Abdus Samad.
be further infused with the elegance and sophistication that reflected Jahangir's own tastes. He devoted most of his energy in cultivating the court culture that is characteristic of the Mughals. Under him, connoisseurship flourished as he encouraged his nobility to adorn cities with palaces, gardens and sarais that demonstrated the opulence of the court and the prosperity of his state.

Itmad-ud-Daulah and Asaf Khan, two of his important prime ministers, were the embodiment of Persian sophistication and grandeur. The former who rose to the premier position after the marriage of Nur Jahan with Jahangir in 1611 A.D. was exceptionally well-educated and skilful in writing and transacting state business.

Itmad-ud-Daulah belonged to a family known for its literary and scholarly achievements. He had studied classical Persian poets and had a fine appreciation of the meaning of words and wrote the Shikasta in bold and elegant style. An idea of Itmad-ud-Daulah's power of literary appreciation can also be had from the fact that when three copies of Jahangirnama were prepared, Jahangir presented one of them to Itmad-ud-Daulah.

Jahangir's famous Wazir patronized Talib Amuli the famous poet who was later enrolled in Jahangir's court and given the title of Malik-u-Shuara (King of poets). The following is a well-known verse written by him:

"Both first and last, love is aye music and joy.

3 His father Muhammad Sharif 'Hijri', his uncles Khwajagi Razi and Mirza Ahmad and his brother Muhammad Tahir Wasli were all poets of varying qualities. Chandra Pant, Nurjahan and her Family, p. 124-129.
6 Ibid., p. 117.
A pleasant wine both when fresh and when mellow

Itmad-ud-Daulah shared along with his son Asaf Khan and daughter Nur Jahan a fondness for construction of monuments of stability and endurance. He created a beautiful home that became a centre of imperial social life. One of the best preserved sarais of Jahangir’s time, the Sarai Doraha on the Lahore – Delhi route was maintained by him as Doraha was part of his land holdings. The fact that it came to be known as Itmad-ud-Daulah Sarai also confirms that he was its patron.

Itmad-ud-Daulah, Jahangir’s senior-most official was also generous and compassionate towards anyone who went to him for help. Jahangir is said to have remarked, “no one ever went to Itmad-ud-Daulah with a petition who turned from him in an injured frame of mind.”

Itmad-ud-Daulah’s wife Asmat Begum was a highly cultured lady. Jahangir described her amicable qualities in the following words, “... in purity of disposition and in wisdom and the excellencies that are the ornament of women, no mother of the age was ever born equal to her and I did not value her less than my own mother...” Itmad-ud-Daulah also lists the support that he got from her as the most important factor that led to his extraordinary rise to power. Although she never interfered in administrative affairs, but intellectually and culturally she

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1. People praised it greatly as a delightful palace and an enchanting residence........... Jahangir, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, p. 73.
2. Wayne E. Begley, ‘Four Mughal caravan sarais built during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, Muqarnas, 1983, p. 172; Catherine Asher, Architecture of Mughal India, p. 139.
3. Although this sarai has no inscriptions but between 1611 A.D. and 1615 A.D. travellers mention Doraha as a halting place confirming the time when it was built.
A Sarai constructed by Itmad-ud-Daulah at Doraha.
was remarkable. She made the glorious discovery of the ‘Itr-i-Jahangir’, an essence, from distilled rose water which is still one of the most sought after luxury goods.

Itmad-ud-Daulah’s son Abul Hasan, later known as Asaf Khan, who was the most influential man in court circles after his father’s death enjoyed a prominent position in Mughal court circles under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. He was a very versatile man who knew something of every science. Literary qualifications made him a master of Persian style and expression. He lived in great style on account of his inherent fondness for opulence. His winning manners and courteousness in official and social interactions ensured his success as a diplomat. The royal books refer to him as “light of the genius of the illuminati, learned in the science of the peripatetics”.

Asaf Khan, like his father, sported an extravagant and lavish lifestyle. His haveli was one of the most notable buildings in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal. His house, reputed for beauty and luxury, was often the site of Jahangir’s own rest and entertainment. The accounts of different contemporary travellers who visited the residences of these

3 “Atr of roses, the most excellent of perfumes was discovered in my regime. The mother of Nur Jahan Begum conceived the idea of collecting the oil which rises to the surface when rose water is heated...” Jahangir, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Vol. I, pp. 270-271.
4 He was appointed Vakil in 1626 A.D. and continued to hold the post under Shah Jahan, Beni Prasad, History of Jahangir, p. 173.
7 I.P. Gupta, Urban Glimpses of the Mughal India- Agra the Imperial Capital in the sixteenth and seventeenth Centuries, p. 70.
nobles corroborate this. In Indian languages, adjectives derived from the word 'Mughal' rightfully connote the ultimate in luxury and style.

Manrique refers to Asaf Khan’s furniture inlaid with precious stones and riches and the walls of his palace panelled with floral design and covered with silk hangings. The rooms of his palace were adorned with fine porcelain vases and flower pots, brought from distant lands.

Asaf Khan and his father Itmad-ud-Daulah were known for hosting feasts. Once on Nauroz (new year day), the greatest festival borrowed from Persia, Asaf Khan invited Jahangir for a feast and welcomed the emperor with a carpet of velvet, woven with gold, spread over a distance of one kos. His presents to the Emperor included, jewels, ornaments, clothes of delicate stuff, four horses and one camel.

An idea of the variety of dishes served by Asaf Khan at a highly placed dinner can be had from the description of Asaf Khan’s banquet held for Sir Thomas Roe.

Interesting accounts that reflect the grandeur of the nobility, and their reckless expenditure or opulence should not lead us to believe that they lacked in generosity, commitment to learning and promotion of arts. Asaf Khan was known to encourage literary activity. He wrote a Masnavi depicting in verse the story of Khusrau and Shirin and dedicated it to Jahangir entitling it Nur Namah (the writing of light). He was known for his patronage to learned men. One of the best known

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Sanskrit scholars of Jahangir's time, Jaganath, who later became Jahangir's court pandit and was called 'Pandit Raj' was patronized by Asaf Khan\(^1\) and wrote 'Asaf Vijaya' an eulogy of Asaf Khan.

The Mughal emperor's passion for architecture was echoed by the nobility who had a definite role in shaping its image. Asaf Khan was not only a noted patron of architecture but also well versed in the subtleties of this craft (Sanat)\(^2\) and was often involved in the planning and construction of imperial buildings.

European travellers, who refer to Lahore as one of the primary cities with increasing importance, talk of a Charbagh constructed by Asaf Khan at Lahore, although the building does not exist now.\(^3\) When Shah Jahan ordered the reconstruction of Shah Burj, also called Musamman Burj, as he was dissatisfied with its appearance, Asaf Khan was asked to supervise the work. He presented the emperor with several plans from which he made the final decision.\(^4\) Asaf Khan thus made a substantial contribution in shaping the image of Mughal architecture.

His love for the aesthetic found representation in the creation of the Nishat Bagh (garden of gladness) situated on the bank of the Dal Lake in Kashmir. It was extended over twelve terraces. The court authors of Shah Jahan rate it next only to the emperor's Shalimar Garden.\(^5\) As a connoisseur of beauty and a man of fine taste he was fond of painting which reached a stage of perfection under Jahangir.

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\(^1\) A Telugu Brahmin whose works like 'manoramuku-mardana' on grammar and Chitra mimansakhandana on rhetoric are well known to scholars of Sanskrit, H.K. Sherwani, *Cultural Trends in Medieval India*, p. 81.


\(^3\) Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, p. 137.

\(^4\) Ibid. p. 179.

and continued to thrive under Shah Jahan.\(^1\) Asaf Khan was one of the prominent patrons of the art of painting at the royal court under them.\(^2\)

With Asaf Khan at the helm of affairs both under Jahangir and Shah Jahan Persian court traditions were followed with a style and grace that overawed spectators. Under his supervision the court decorum was followed very strictly, The *Vakil-us-Sultanat*’s family performing ‘Kornish’ and ‘Chahar Taslim’ and sitting down only when the emperor demanded them to do so the third time reflect the court etiquettes followed in the empire.\(^3\) Another important Persian festival, the ‘*Jashn-i-Gulab posh*’ was celebrated with Asaf Khan along with Shahzadas presenting Surahis filled with rose water or with the aroma of orange (Arq-i-fitnah’) to the emperor.\(^4\) Asaf Khan also enjoyed the reputation of being very gentle, affable and humane and was known to have looked after his servants very well.\(^5\)

Shah Jahan’s reign represented the height of Mughal splendour and affluence that dazzled visitors.\(^6\) His reign also witnessed the completion of the process of Mughal cultural transformation from the disorderliness of the Turko-Mongols to ceremonialism, the style of the Persians. This process that began with Humayun’s exile in Persia was heightened under the influence of his Persian wives and men of Persian background like Bairam Khan, Abdur Rahim, Itmad-ud-Daulah, Asaf Khan and Afzal Khan holding the highest offices in the empire.

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\(^1\) Mughal art of painting is best described by Abul Fazl who says, ‘Drawing the likeness of anything is called *Tasvir*’. *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 113.
\(^2\) B.P. Saksena, *History of Shah Jahan at Dihli*, p. 266.
\(^3\) Manrique, *Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique*, 1629-1643, pp. 113, 120.
\(^4\) Muhammad Azhar Ansari, *Social Life of the Mughal Emperors*, 1526-1707, p. 211.
Afzal Khan who was appointed Diwan a year after Shah Jahan's accession was an influential man of high literary attainments who distinguished himself in the realm of letters. An important cultural contribution of Afzal Khan was the encouragement given to literary activity. He patronized a large number of Persian scholars among whom Aminai Qazvini and Jalaluddin Tabatabai are prominent. Chandra Bhan Brahman, the author of Chahar Chaman who was called 'Hindu-i-Farzidan' (Persian knowing Hindu) by Shah Jahan was also patronized by Afzal Khan. Shah Jahan's reign saw the influx of a large number of poets from Persia. Afzal Khan was the patron of Muhammad Faruq a poet very popular for his delightful verses.

Afzal Khan was also known for his elegant and ornate style in writing private and official letters of correspondence. The fanciful imagery of his letters are still held as models. Such men added to the grandeur of the Mughal court. He was an excellent man irreproachable in conduct and was admired for his eloquence, knowledge of astronomy, mathematics and accounts.

An important cultural contribution of Afzal Khan was the construction of the Chini ka Rauza, the best example of tile decoration in India, for his own tomb. The most striking feature of the building was the tile decoration that covered the exterior of the building with exclusive Persian motifs. It was a very costly style of decoration in inlaid

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1 Although Asaf Khan, the emperor's father-in-law was the Vakil-us-Sultanat, he did not get any opportunity to dominate Afzal Khan, whose ascendancy over the Vakil was clearly established. Abdul Hamid Lahori, Badshahnama, Vol. II, p. 234.
4 Persia had been the centre of the art of glazed tiling and from there it was introduced into India. R.Nath, "Tile Decoration and Chini Ka Rauza", Medieval India - A Miscellany, Vol. I, p. 260.
marble but the art died out with subsequent domination of marble and other forms of decoration.  

Islam Khan, Shah Jahan’s Diwan for six years had full knowledge of the rational and traditionary sciences. He was known to be a calligraphist as well. On account of his sound learning coupled with his military capacity he earned the title of ‘Sahib-i-Saif-o-Qalam’ (master of pen and sword). He was a good writer and a poet and was also the patron of a poet called Salim, a native of Teheran, who wrote a short masnavi on his patron’s exploits in Kuch Bihar and Assam.

Sadullah Khan was the most learned and efficient Diwan in the long line of Mughal Wazirs. Apart from his literary accomplishments he was just and honest in the performance of his duties. A man of great wisdom he was devoted to training in traditionary sciences. Besides Persian and Arabic he also knew Turkish. Being a fluent speaker and conversationist, Sadullah Khan’s literary bent of mind made him encourage scholars. Whenever he heard of accomplished people he kept them in his service on a larger salary (bish-qarar). He was the patron of Abdul Hamid Lahori. When the emperor desired to appoint an author who could write his memoirs in the style of Abul Fazl’s Akbarnama he recommended him to the Emperor. Sadullah Khan was a skilled writer of prose and the letters drafted by him were known for their style and elegance. He was also renowned for his ready wit and presence of mind.

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As *Diwan* of the emperor who had a passion for architecture, Sadullah Khan was aware of the potential of architecture as a means of self representation. His mansion at Shahjahanabad was one of the finest in the city. It had hamams of marble with glazed skylight in its precincts. He also supervised the construction of the Jami Masjid, the only structure in the city that matched the eminence of the palace fortress.

Sadullah Khan, known for his fondness for grandeur, furnished the hall of special audience (*Diwan-i-Khas*) at the palace fortress with carpets worth sixty thousand rupees. He also composed a verse and inscribed it on the wall of the Aramgah for which Shah Jahan honoured him with a special Khila’at and a promotion of 7,000 zat and 7,000 Sawar.

Sadullah Khan contributed to the cultural set up of Shahjahanabad where he constructed a square (chowk) in the middle of Khas Bazaar the street that linked the Jami Masjid and the palace. The chowk had shops selling cloth, medicine, food items, birds and fruits. Physicians, astrologers and dancing girls carried on their trade from the chowk. Chowk Sadullah Khan also became a place for a ‘Nakhas’ (an

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5 An eighteenth century geographer wrote, Shah Jahanbad was always the Dar-ul-Mulk (seat of the Empire of the great Sultans) and the Markaz-i-Dairah (Centre of the circle of Islam).
6 The place came to be known as Chowk Sadulla Khan, Shama Mitra Chenoy, *Shah Jahanbad, the City of Delhi*, 1638-1857.
impromptu or elementary bazaar) where people came from neighbouring areas to sell mainly perishable goods of daily consumption.¹

Sadullah Khan was also known for his sense of justice and charity. He never acted tyrannously towards peasants in collection of government dues and never allowed fear or favouritism to influence his decisions.² In one of the letters addressed to crown prince Muhammad Muazzam, Aurangzeb quotes Sadullah Khan, “Justice and charity are the qualities which are the best means of satisfying the creator”.³ Sadullah Khan’s greatness also lay in preserving the qualities of honesty and loyalty in his dealings. In the Ruqqat-i-Alamgiri, Aurangzeb records that once being disengaged from prayer Sadullah Khan raised his hands asking for blessings from the Almighty. When asked what his wish was, the great man replied “to be an honest man.”⁴

Sadullah Khan was always hopeful of a great future of the Mughal empire. He believed that no age was without men of ability – all that was needed was a wise master to find them out, cherish them and get work done by them.

Shah Jahan’s son and successor Aurangzeb, generally considered to be the last great emperor of the Mughal dynasty, ruled over an empire ridden with persistent warfare in the Deccan and increased factionalism among the nobility. He, therefore failed to continue the trend of his predecessors that had bestowed peace, prosperity and culture to the people of India.⁵

¹ Francois Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire, pp. 243-244; H. K. Naqvi, “Shahjahanbad, the Mughal Delhi 1638-1803, An Introduction”, in Frykenberg, ed., Delhi, p. 145.
⁴ Ibid., p. 48.
The political instability of Aurangzeb's reign paralleled the lack of vitality in artistic production and thriving art forms that had been hitherto nurtured by the royalty and nobility.\(^1\) Aurangzeb's austere and moralist lifestyle which is often held responsible for the cultural decline of the empire failed to have any marked effect on the lifestyle of the nobility that continued to lead an ostentatious life while the empire witnessed a decline in territory.\(^2\)

The nobility, in general continued to encourage and patronise different art forms in a changed scenario where the emperor was no longer the model patron for them to emulate, but a record of the involvement of his prime ministers towards socio-cultural enrichment in a significant way also seems to be missing.

Mir Jumla (Muazzam Khan), who became Shah Jahan's Wazir in 1656 A.D. a little before his master was forced to relinquish the throne in favour of Aurangzeb, was a learned man well versed in the Quran and the Hadis, with great command over the Persian language\(^3\) and was counted amongst the scholar courtiers of Shah Jahan's reign. His intelligence and foresight won him epithets like 'Asaf of the age' (Asaf ud dauran) and 'Plato of the age'.\(^4\)

Muazzam Khan remained involved in military exercises for long periods of time and therefore could not make any significant contribution in socio-cultural advancement but he was always sympathetic towards the well being of the subjects by strictly enforcing

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\(^1\) D. Pant, *Commercial Policy of the Mughals*, p. 237. This led to decline of village industries and the erosion of art and culture which resulted in the economic impoverishment of India. Jadunath Sarkar, "The condition of the People in Aurangzib's Reign" in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subramanyam, ed., *The Mughal State*, p. 306.


orders against oppression and plunder by the Mughal armies\(^1\) in the North-East.

Muazzam Khan was known to be a man of justice and impartial integrity\(^2\) but writers like Bernier and Mannucci have accused him of treachery\(^3\) for he shifted his loyalties quite often. He was undoubtedly an opportunist, but it must not be forgotten that he was confronted with equally unscrupulous and formidable enemies.

An important contribution of Muazzam Khan to the Mughal dynasty and to world is the gift of the Kohinoor diamond, now in the possession of the British Crown.\(^4\) The diamond, unparallel in size and beauty, was one of the most magnificent gifts ever offered to Shah Jahan. It weighted two hundred and sixteen Surkhs and was valued that time at two lakhs and sixteen thousand rupees.\(^5\)

Some works of public utility established by Muazzam Khan are still found in the Deccan and in Bengal. In Telengana, where he spent many years, there are several monuments in his name. In Hyderabad, a tank, a garden and a mansion bearing his name still exist. A village called Saifabad, near Haiderabad thrived under his assistance.\(^6\)

His fondness for architecture is proved from the fact that he constructed some buildings at the fort of Gandikota which included a

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2 Jerson, the English factor at Agra wrote to the Surat authorities (15\(^{th}\) August 1656) about Mir Jumla “Tis reported he does good justice…….” *The English Factories in India*, Vol. X, p.71.
Jama Masjid.\textsuperscript{1} He also improved the road from Dacca to Gandikota fort.\textsuperscript{2} A bridge constructed by him over the Pagla river near Dacca has been described by Tavernier as a fine piece of construction. Muazzam Khan also built a number of rest houses for the general public.\textsuperscript{3}

Despite the wealth he possessed, Muazzam Khan was known to be corrupt for he stopped the trade by the English at Kasim Bazaar in 1659 A.D., unless some presents were offered to him. Once this was done the permission was granted. In 1660 A.D. Muazzam Khan demanded twenty thousand pagodas from the English factors and asked them to remit thirty two thousand pagodas which he owed to the company.\textsuperscript{4} The prevalence of such corrupt practices by the senior most officers of the empire who along with others were also appropriating a major share in the distribution of land revenue, apart from reflecting the character of the individual concerned had a further negative impact on the economy.\textsuperscript{5} It also reflects that Aurangzeb’s puritan and idealist way of life did not in any way influence the ruling classes.

Jafar Khan, besides being a man of learning\textsuperscript{6}, was known for geniality of temperament, righteousness and affable manners. Extremely civil and courteous, he set an example to be followed in excellence of manners (Mirza Manishi) and no one could equal him in

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\item It is described as one of the largest mosques in the Madras Presidency.
\item A farman of Aurangzeb preserved in the Mirat-i-Ahmadi illustrates the different ways by which senior Mughal nobility squeezed trade and commerce through unauthorised taxes, Athar Ali, \textit{The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb}, p. 159.
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Mirzai etiquette,¹ the rules of which were laid down by 'Mirza Namah', an early seventeenth century manual.²

Jafar Khan, despite his goodness was representative of the decline in the character of the nobility. When in 1667 A.D., the French were keen to obtain a farman for trade from the emperor they offered Jafar Khan ten thousands rupees in order to get the Parwana that would allow them the facility.³

Jafar Khan, although known for his right mindedness, was very fond of drinking and continued to drink heavily despite Aurangzeb admonishing him and telling him that he was under obligation to set a good example for the subjects. In fact he died on account of his health failing due to excessive drinking.⁴ Although he enjoyed great respect as Wazir, no measure of reforms, no earnestness to patronize scholars or artisans, no desire to improve the condition of the people can be ascribed to him.⁵

Asad Khan, who enjoyed a long period of thirty years as Wazir, was a learned man but Aurangzeb's involvement in the Deccan that coincided with Asad Khan's Wazirship left no scope for him to pursue cultural interests. Besides, the Wazir chose to work in total conformity with the emperor who disliked painting music, architecture (except for mosques) and poetry (except for verses from the Holy Quran) more for reasons of temperament and training than for their being unislamic.

¹ Syed Anees Jahan, Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-ul-Lubab, p. 261. Although the word Adab was sometimes used in Mughal India, the current term for gentlemanliness in a prince or a noble was Mirzai. The term was used for one who was highly well bred and cultured.
³ Corruption in trade prevailed everywhere and no assistance was rendered by the authorities unless they were paid for it. Athar Ali, The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb, p.158.
⁵ Laiq Ahmad, Prime Ministers of Aurangzeb, p. 99.
پاروانه عادل می‌باشد و به من برای رفع مشکلات مالی و اقتصادی آزمایش و بررسی می‌شود. به‌طور کل، این پاروانه باید توسط بانک‌ها و مؤسسات مالی تأمین شود.

Parwana issued by Asad Khan
THE PARWANAH OF ASAD KHAN

All the gumushtahs of jagirdars, and the present and future karoris of Parganah Gopa Mau, the dependency of the sarkar Khairabad, an appendage of the subah of Awadh be aware that according to the Exalted Farman (containing) the happy title of His Majesty, the sovereign of the world and the universe, the master of all property and inhabitants, the means of the repose of the mankind, the reflection of the Sublime God, the manifestation of the most perfect Protector (parwardigar), the Divine Gift of the Creator of the Universe, the builder of the foundation of the government (jahanbani), the architect of the rules of the world-conquest, the refuge of the khilafat, the shadow of God, dated 14th Dhilqadah the 39th regnal year of the auspicious occasion, the mawza of KORSINDA etc., a dependency of the above mentioned parganah, with a jama of fifteen thousand two hundred and sixty one dams has been bestowed upon Shaikh Muhammad Anwar as the mahal of his gajir till his life-time and after (his death) it will be turned as wajh-i-madad-maash of Musammat Dulari, his mother, and other dependents (like) Shaikh Muhammad Munawwar and Shaikh Nimat Allah, the father and the grand-father. Therefore, it is incumbent on you to act in compliance with the Exalted Farman. You should leave the above-mentioned mauza in their possession and it should be exempted from all urjihat and awaridat, so that utilizing its hasil as their livelihood they may pray for the perpetuity of this Dominion. If they hold any other thing elsewhere it should not be taken notice of. This should be considered an order.

Written on the 24th Dhilhijjah 39th regnal year of the Auspicious Accession.

Seal of Asad Khan, the servant of Aurangzib.

In connection with wajh-i-madad-i-maash of Musammat Dulari, the mother of Shaikh Muhammad Anwar and other dependents in compliance with the Exalted Farman, the mauza of KORSANDAH etc. two mauzas from the 'amal of Parganah Gopa Mau, Sarkar Khairabad from the mahal-i-jogir of the aforesaid person up to his life as jagir and after his death in the form of madad-i-maash.

Korsanda and Mala Bhir
mauza mauza
acts. However, he was a religious man who indulged in charity. A Parwana issued by him dated 16th December, 1586 A.D. is a proof of this.

Asad Khan was an example of loyalty to one's master. The conquest of Golcunda could be achieved through his efforts as his presence on the scene of warfare was a sober influence on the Persian nobles and prevented quarrel among them. Under his influence the soldiers displayed exemplary devotion to the imperial cause. He cannot be censured for partiality to the enemy on account of Golkunda being a Shia state.\textsuperscript{1} There are other incidents also to prove Asad Khan's loyalty towards Aurangzeb and the latter's trust in him.\textsuperscript{2}

However, Asad Khan, who possessed enormous wealth, preferred to maintain a large harem\textsuperscript{3} rather than spending it on any kind of encouragement to the cause of learning or building activity for public welfare or patronizing artists and craftsmen. The lack of vitality in artistic production in times of military and political instability could also have been the result of increased factionalism among the nobility and persistent warfare in the Deccan.

Asad Khan, like some of his predecessors, was known to be corrupt in commercial dealings. William Norris, the British Ambassador to the Mughal court, had to offer presents to the Wazir to win his support for submitting a petition for friendly commercial relations before the emperor.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1} Although Jadunath Sarkar has accused the Shias for their half heartedness in the siege of Golkunda, \textit{History of Aurangzeb}, Vol. IV, Longman, New Delhi, 1972, p. 310. Asad Khan who was sent with Kambaksh to get reinforcements even risked his life for the imperial cause while doing so.


\textsuperscript{3} Mannucci who enjoyed the confidence of his wife Naval Bai, describes the life in his harem, \textit{Storia do Mogor}, Vol. II, pp. 352-53.

In a significant development, after the death of Aurangzeb\textsuperscript{1}, Asad Khan and his son Zulfikar Khan were responsible for the reversal of Jaziya\textsuperscript{2} proving the fact that Aurangzeb's orthodox views were not always to the liking of his nobility\textsuperscript{3} and Asad Khan represented that section of the nobility which considered Jaziya as inexpedient.\textsuperscript{4} The rejection of Aurangzeb's orthodox policies by the nobility and these being given up within a decade of his death by his descendants demonstrates the practical impossibility of basing the State in India on Shariat and making a distinction between Hindus and Muslims. Satish Chandra rightly remarks that even under an emperor like Aurangzeb, the ruling classes continued to draw their moral sustenance from their beliefs and convictions and the intellectual and cultural ethos of the nobility could not be determined by the outlook of individual rulers.\textsuperscript{5}

The encouragement to literary activity, various forms of art, and extensive building activity like mosques, madarsas, khanqahs, sarais, hamams, gardens, particularly by prime ministers under Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan apart from asserting their authority enhanced their reputation by earning them the admiration of the subjects. Such endeavors also provided gainful employment to a large number of artisans. They also bring to light the fact that the immense wealth possessed by the aristocracy was not entirely wasted in

\textsuperscript{1} Precisely nine days after the accession of the new monarch.
\textsuperscript{2} Satish Chandra, \textit{Parties and Politics of the Mughal Court}, 1707-1740, pp. 74-75.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p. 57.
extravagance but used for encouraging public welfare. The political and cultural behavior patterns of the nobility did result in important socio-cultural changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

However, the situation began changing in the last decades of Aurangzeb rule and the decline of the empire is chiefly seen in terms of degeneration of the nobility. The general indifference among the royalty and nobility to various arts which is reflected in the regression of medieval Indian culture in the eighteenth century could be ascribed to the economic decline of the nobility.

"Men who once led a life of luxury are without means of livelihood, 
They are like a sparkling spring that has gone dry."

The decline in the fortunes of the nobility was bound to result in breakdown of the patronage system, for which the Mughal nobility was renowned, resulting in unemployment and hardships for their beneficiaries.

"Now thousands of people are without employment, 
Only a few lucky ones succeed in getting some work."\(^1\)

However, the Mughal court despite its decline remained a model for others to emulate. The Marathas, Jats and even the French followed the lifestyles of the Mughal nobility. Their forms of address, their conventions of behaviour, their etiquettes became recognized as the standard of conduct. The ostentatious pattern of Mughal court life was destined to survive and it received a new lease of life in regional kingdoms like Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad whose rise coincided with the decline of the Mughal empire.

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