CHAPTER-V

SOCIO-CULTURAL HISTORY OF SUBAH OF BIHAR

Mughal Society:

Society in Mughal times was organized on a feudal basis and the head of the social system was Emperor. He enjoyed an unparallel status. He was the ultimate authority in everything. Next in rank were the nobility along the zamindars. The Mughal nobles monopolized most of the jobs in the country. Socially and economically the Mughal nobility formed a privileged class. There were men of every type and nationality among the Mughal nobles. Clan or family links were the most important considerations for recruitment and admission to the aristocratic class of the society. Zamindars or the chieftains also constituted the nobility. They had their own armed forces and generally lived in forts or garhis which was both a place of refuge and a status symbol. There was a large class of merchants and traders. They had their own rights based on tradition and protection of life and property. They also maintained a high standard of living.

During Mughal period the Indian society was in the process of developing into a common society for the religious groups of Hindus and Muslims. Inter-mixing and adaptation of each others culture was fairly common. Among the prevalent social practices the purdah system was one of that but it was practiced more by the women of upper classes. The child marriage was prevalent. Though polygamy was prevalent in upper sections of society the common people followed monogamy.

Dowry system was common in Hindu society. The sati was prevalent though Akbar tried to discourage sati by issuing orders but he could not forbid it altogether. Aurangzeb was the only Mughal who issued definite orders in 1664 forbidding sati. The Muslim society was also divided based on the place of origination.
The widow remarriage was prevalent in the society. Economically Muslim woman was entitled to a share in the inheritance. The Hindu society was divided into four castes. The coming of Muslims and their constant condemnation of the caste system made the system more rigid. The Hindu society in order to strengthen itself recasted the Smritis and tried to bring back from the Islamic fold those Muslims who were converts from Hinduism.

It was a common practice to maintain a large contingent of slaves both males and females. The prisoners of war were generally the main constituent of this system. They were supposed to perform every task free of cost. But they were not subject to torture.

The lower class comprised of the cultivators, artisans, small traders, shop-keepers, household servants, slaves etc. Most of them were condemned to live a hard life. Their lives were simple and their belongings were meagre.

*Table (1) Social Structure of the Moghul Empire*

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<th>Percentage of labour force</th>
<th>Per cent of national</th>
<th>Income after tax</th>
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<td>Jagirdars</td>
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<td>Native princes</td>
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<td>Petty traders &amp; entrepreneurs</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>Urban artisans &amp; construction workers</td>
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Mughal society was predominantly non-Muslim. Akbar therefore had not simply to maintain his status as a Muslim ruler but also to be liberal enough to elicit active support from non-Muslims. For that purpose, he had to deal first with the Muslim theologians and lawyers (ulamā) who, in the face of Brahmanic resilience, were rightly concerned with the community’s identity and resisted any effort that could encourage a broader notion of political participation. Akbar began his drive by abolishing both the jizyah and the practice of forcibly converting prisoners of war to Islam and by encouraging Hindus as his principal confidants and policy makers. He had also undertaken a number of stern measures to reform the administration of religious grants, which were now available to learned and pious men of all religions, not just Islam.

A comparative study of religions convinced Akbar that there was truth in all of them but that no one of them possessed absolute truth. He therefore disestablished Islam as the religion of the state and adopted a theory of rulership as a divine illumination incorporating the acceptance of all, irrespective of creed or sect. He repealed discriminatory laws against non-Muslims and amended the personal laws of both Muslims and Hindus so as to provide as many common laws as possible. While Muslim judicial courts were allowed as before, the decision of the Hindu village pancayats also was recognized. The emperor created a new order commonly called the Dīn-e Ilāhī (“Divine Faith”), which was modeled on the Muslim mystical Sufi brotherhood. The new order had its own initiation ceremony and rules of conduct to ensure complete devotion to the emperor; otherwise, members
were permitted to retain their diverse religious beliefs and practices.

**SOCIETY IN SUBAH BIHAR**

In the Subah of Bihar Hindu society were divided into four parts. They are:

(i) Brahmans
(ii) Rajputs (Ksatriya)
(iii) Vaishya
(iv) Shoodra.

The three caste are most powerfull and responsible in the society. Normally peoples are so poor and they faces many difficulties in their lifes. Only zamindar, vazir and some other pople are economically rich and their life style was so good.

**Brahman** the highest of the four Hindu castes. However, Brahmans do not form a single group, but are heterogeneous and have more than two thousand branches. The Saraswata Brahmans alone have more than 469 branches. Though there is a social and religious barrier between castes, inter-caste marriage does take place, with Brahman men being allowed to marry women of different castes. All Brahmans do not possess the same status. During the Muslim period, the Brahmans were variously established, with most of the poets and scholars being Brahmans.

**RAJPUTS (Ksatriya)** the second of the four Hindu castes. The Rigvedic hymn *Purusasukta* states that Ksatriyas originated from the arms of the Creator. Ksatriyas are ranked after Brahmans and their chief duty in the past was to ensure the safety and security of the state and its people. In other words, they were rulers and warriors. They are the decenders of Aryan. Apart from ruling the country, they also acquired knowledge. There were several Ksatriya saints, composers of Vedic hymns, and scholars who attained high intellectual and social position.
There are more than 590 Ksatriya castes and sub-castes in India. Ksatriyas did not emerge as a strong caste or sub-caste, intermarriages between Ksatriya men and Vaisya and Sudra women created two sub-castes: Mahisya and Ugra.

**Vaishya** is a Hindu caste. Vaisyas occupy third position and enjoy the privileged occupation of ploughing the land, breeding animals, and carrying on trade and commerce. They were then both farmers, traders and merchants. So the keys to economic development were in their hands. The Vaisyas were Aryans and constituted rich class who not only possessed farming land, animals and cattle but controlled trade and commerce. The term ‘Vaisya’ is a very wide one and includes many business communities.

**Shudra** The fourth and the last varna or caste in the Hindu socio-religious hierarchy is Shudra. The Aryans grouped themselves into Brahman, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya and assumed the responsibilities of performing different types of important work while the non-Aryans and natives were made Shudra and allotted physical labour for the services of the higher castes. Nevertheless, many ancient Indians remained outside the four castes and lived independently of the influences of casteism.

In India Shudras belong to the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes and account for more than 52% of the Indian population and have about 3,473 sub-castes or jaties. The Shudras are untouchables and extremely poor. They have little access to sanitation, housing, health care, and education facilities. Untouchability has almost disappeared from Bangladesh but it is still acute in many parts of India. In the ancient and medieval periods, there were Shudra hermits, sages, scholars, heroes.

**The Four Period of Religious Life.**

Among the Brāhmans, the period of individual life, after the intelligence is to some degree matured, is divided into four portions, (2) to each of which is assigned its special important duties. These periods severally receive the name of A´śrama.
The First Period is the *Brahma-charya*, or religious studentship. Investiture with the sacred thread is regarded by the Brāhmans as the first principle of their creed, and the three superior castes do not acknowledge the right of due membership without it. With a Brāhman it must be made in the eighth year, or if this auspicious time is suffered to elapse, it may be performed up to sixteen years of age. A Kshatriya may be invested between eleven and twenty-two years of age, and a Vaiśya from twelve to twenty-four, but a Sūdra is not considered a fitting recipient.

*The Second Period* is the *Gárhasthya*, or a state in which the duties of a householder are observed and the person so engaged is called *Gáhastha*. When the *Brahmachárin* has completed his studies, if he feels called to the religious life and his heart is estranged from the world, nothing can more conduce to his welfare than the endeavour to attain eternal bliss, but if he has no such vocation, he should seek the consent of his teacher and, having obtained permission, return to his father's house.

*The Third Period* is that of the *Vánaprastha* or anchorite, a name given also to the person so engaged. This is forbidden to a ’Súdra. When one (of the other castes) arrives at old age, or has a grandson, he may wisely give up the management of his household to his son or to a relation, abandon worldly concerns, and leaving the city, retire into the desert. He may there build himself a hermitage, and putting away the outward pleasures of sense, practise mortification of his body in preparation for his last journey.

*The fourth period* is *Sannyása*, which is an extraordinary state of austerity that nothing can surpass, and which when duly carried out is rewarded by final liberation. Such a person His Majesty calls *Sannyásí*.

**WORSHIP OF THE DEITY** (3)

The Hindu sages declare that whoever seeks to do the will of God, must devote certain works exclusively to purposes of worship
and the first six of the nine schools already alluded to, comprise this under four heads.

The First is—

I´SVARA-PÚJÁ, or Divine Worship

Since according to their belief, the Supreme Deity can assume an elemental form without defiling the skirt of the robe of omnipotence, they first make various idols of gold and other substances to represent this ideal and gradually withdrawing the mind from this material worship, they become meditatively absorbed in the ocean of His mysterious Being. Sixteen ceremonies conduce to this end. After the performance of the Homa and Sandhyá obligations, the devotee sits down facing the east or north, and taking up a little rice and water sprinkles (the idol) with the intention of beginning the worship of God. Then follows the Kalasa-pújá or pitcher-worship. The water of the pitcher which is required for the ceremony is venerated after a special manner.

Worship is of six kinds: (i). in the heart. (ii). Making the sun a means of divine adoration. (iii). Causing fire to serve the purpose of spiritual recollection. (iv). Worshipping in presence of water. (v). Cleaning a spot of ground as a place for worship. (6). Making an idol a representative object of prayer. They also make images of those who have attained to God and account their veneration as a means of salvation.

The Second kind is—

YAJÁ, or Sacrifice. (4)

By this the favour of the deities is obtained and it becomes the means of securing the blessing of God. The term Jág is also used. Páka-yajna (simple or domestic sacrifice) is making the Homa in the name of the deities and bestowing charity before taking food. This is variously performed. Japa-yajna is the muttering of incantations and the names of God. These two, like the first, are of daily practice. Vidhi-yajna or ceremonial act of worship is of numerous kinds, in each of which important conditions are prescribed, large sums of money expended and many animals sacrificed. One of these is the Aśvamedha, or horse-
sacrifice, which is performed by sovereign princes. When its necessary preparations are completed, a white horse having the right ear black, is brought out and consecrated by certain incantations, and (being turned loose) it is followed in its march by an army for conquest which in a short time subdues the world and the king of every territory (which it enters) tenders submission and joins the victorious forces.

The Third kind is—

**DĀNA, or Alms giving.** (5)

There are numerous forms of this meritorious precept and various are the modes by which the provision for man's last journey is secured. The following sixteen are accounted the most important:—

(i). **Tulá-dána** or the *weighing* of the person against gold, silver and other valuables. (ii). **Hirayagarbha-dána**: an idol of Brahmá is fashioned of gold, having four faces in each of which are two eyes, two ears, a mouth and nose. It must have four hands, and the rest of the members are after the form of men. (iii). **Brahmáa-dána**, or alms of the *egg of Brahmá*. (iv). **Kalpa-taru-dána**. This is the name of a tree* (taru) which is one of the fourteen treasures brought out of the sea, as will be related. (v). **Go-sahasra-dána**, is the alms of a *thousand cows* with one bull, having the tips of their horns, according to ability, plated with gold or silver and their humps covered with copper, with bells and tassels of yâk's hair round their necks, and pearls in their tails. (vi). **Hira-yakamadhenu-dána**. (vii). **Hirayásva-dána**. A golden horse is fashioned weighing from ten *tolahs* to 3,633 *tolahs* and four *máshas*. (viii). **Hirayásva-ratha**. (ix). **Hemahasti-ratha-dána** is an alms of a *chariot of gold* drawn by four *elephants*. Its weight is from sixteen *tolahs* and eight *máshas* to the maximum aforesaid. (x). **Pañcha-lángala-dána** is a gift of *five ploughs* of gold of the above weight. (xi.) **Dhara-dána**, is a figure of the surface of the *earth* made of gold, upon which are represented mountains, woods and seas, weighing not less than sixteen *tolahs*, eight *máshas*, and not more than 3,633 *tolahs*. (xii.) **Viśva-chakra-dána**. (xiii.) **Kalpa-latadána** is in the shape of a *creeper*. (xiv.) **Sapta-ságara-dána**.
(xv.) Ratna-dhenu-dána, the representation of a cow with a calf made up of jewels. (xvi.) Mahábhuta-ghaa-dána,* is a representation in gold of the figure of a man surmounted by the head of an elephant, which is called Gaeśa.

The Fourth kind is—

**SRÁDDHA, or Ceremonies in honour of deceased ancestors.**

The charity is given in the name of deceased ancestors and is of various kinds, but four are specially observed: (i). on the day of decease and its anniversary. (ii) on the first day of the first quarter of the new moon. (iii). On the sixteenth lunar day of the month of Kuár, (Sept. Oct.) (iv.) Bestowing charity in a place of worship in the name of the deceased.

**AVATÁRAS or Incarnations of the Deity**

They believe that the Supreme Being in the wisdom of His counsel assumes an elementary form of a special character for the good of the creation, and many of the wisest of the Hindus accept this doctrine. Such a complete incarnation is called Púrávatára, and that principle which in some created forms is scintillant with the rays of the divinity and bestows extraordinary powers is called Anśávatára or partial incarnation. These latter will not be here considered.

**MATSYÁVATÁRA or Fish-Incarnation:**

The Deity was herein manifested under the form of a fish. They say that in the Dráviá country at the extremity of the Dekhan in the city of Bhadrávatí, during the Satya Yuga on the eleventh lunar day of the month of Phálguna (Feb.-March), Rájá Manu, having withdrawn himself from all worldly concerns, and being then ten hundred thousand years of age, lived in the practice of great austerities.

**KÚRMÁVATÁRA or Tortoise-Incarnation:** (9)

In the Satya Yuga in the light half of the month of Kárttika (Oct.-Nov.), on the twelfth lunar day, the Creator manifested
Lord Mahavira: Last Tirthankara of Jainism born in Vaishali and Died at Pawapuri.

himself in the shape of a tortoise. They relate that the deities wished to obtain the water of immortality after the manner of butter by churning the ocean of milk. Instead of a churning-stick, they used the largest of the mountains, Mandara. From its excessive weight the mountain sunk into the ocean and great were their difficulties. The Deity assumed this shape and bore up the mountain on his back and the gods obtained their desire.
The Mahabodhi Temple, among the four holy sites related to the life of the Lord Buddha and UNESCO World Heritage Site[1]
Lord Buddha: Founder of Buddhism, got enlightenment under Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya.
**VÁRÁHÁVATÁRA or Boar-Incarnation.** (10)

In the *Satya Yuga*, on the day of the full moon in the month of *Kárttika* (Oct.-Nov.) in the city of *Brahmávarta* near *Nimishára* and *Ayodhya*, this manifestation took place. One of the *Daityas* named *Hirayáksha* had passed a long period in the practice of austerities and the worship of God.

**NARA-SINHA (11) or Man-Lion-Incarnation:**

This was a form from the head to the waist like a lion and the lower parts resembling a man, and was manifested in the *Satya Yuga* on the fourteenth of the light half of the month of *Vaiśákha* (April-May), in the city of *Hirayapúra* now commonly called Hindaun* near the metropolis of Agra.

**VÁMANA (12) or Dwarf-Incarnation:**

In the *Tretá Yuga*, on the twelfth day of the light half of the month of *Bháдрapada* (H. *Bhád*, Aug.-Sept.) in the city of *Sonbhadrá* on the banks of the Narbadá, this new manifestation was born of *Aditi* in the house of *Kaśyapa*, the son of *Maríchi,* the son of the legendary *Brahmá*.

**PARAŚURÁMÁVATÁRA (13) or Incarnation of Ráma with the axe:**

In the house of Jamadagni a Bráhman, and of his wife Reǔuká, during the *Tretá Yuga*, on the third day of the light half of the month of *Vaiśákha*, in the village of Rankaa* near Agra, this human form was born.

**RÁMÁVATÁRA (14) or Ráma-Incarnation:**

They relate that Rávaa one of the *Rákshasas* two generations in descent from *Brahmá*, had ten heads and twenty hands. He underwent austerities for a period of ten thousand years in the Kailásá mountain and devoted his heads, one after another in this penance in the hope of obtaining the sovereignty of the three worlds.
Muslim society:

It was also divided into two sects:

(i) Shia

(ii) Sunni.

Shi’ah (or Shi’ite), a Muslim sect which believes that the caliphate succession should follow the line of the family of the Prophet MUHAMMAD (Sm) beginning with Hazrat Ali the son-in-law of the Prophet ‘Ali. However, the succession was fiercely opposed by Mu’awiyah, a relative of Hazrat Uthman, the third caliph. ‘Ali was assassinated and succeeded by his son, Hasan, who, however, was later forced to cede the caliphate to Mu’awiyah. Hasan died shortly thereafter, allegedly poisoned. Following the death of Mu’awiyah, Husain, the brother of Hasan, expected to become caliph, but Mu’awiyah’s son Yazid, whom Mu’awiyah had named to succeed him, became caliph. Husain led an unsuccessful revolt against Yazid and was killed at Karbala.

The fate of Hazrat Ali and his sons inspired the rise of the Shi’ahs, who believe that Ali had a special spiritual function alongside that of the Prophet which gave him and his descendants the right to spiritual leadership. This function was passed on by Hazrat Ali to his descendants who are the imams. The Shi’ahs, believe that there are twelve imams, beginning with Hazrat ‘Ali and his sons Hasan and Husain and ending with the twelfth imam who is still alive and will return just before the world ends.

Shi’ism, which was initially a political issue, slowly developed into a sacred dogma which gained ground under the ‘Abbasids when open expression of Shi’ite thought and activities were permitted. In 962 formal public mourning of Husain as a martyr was instituted. It was finally in the 16th century, when the Safavid dynasty came to power in Persia, that Shi’ism began to be propagated with missionary zeal. The Safavid rulers made Shi’ism the state religion of Persia.

Apart from the status of Hazrat ‘Ali ® and his sons and the idea of the living imam, Shi’ahs and Sunnis differ doctrinally on a
number of points. Some differences, for example, pertain to prayer; for example, in the *adhan*, or call to prayer, Shiahs add the line: *Aliyyu waṭiyyullah* (Ali is the friend/ saint of God). They also add the line: *Hayya ala khayrī-l-amal* (rise up for the best works) twice, which they believe was originally part of the prayer. Moreover, after the *iqamah* (a repetition of the adhan) and during the *qiyyam* (standing position), Sunnis fold their hands in front, while Shi'ahs let their hands hang on either side. After Sunnis fold their hands, they do not raise them while saying *Allahu Akbar*. Shiahs, however, raise their hands every time. They also systematically combine the two afternoon prayers.

The first ten days of the month of *MUHARRAM* were declared as holidays by *MURSHID QULI KHAN* in honour of the martyrdom of Imam Husain and his followers. Over time, Muharram turned out to be one of the biggest festivals of Bengal. To please the nawabs and the Shiah nobility, even Hindu zamindars used to promote the Muharram festival very actively. For example, the most attractive *ta'ziyas* and ta'ziah processions in the province used to be organised by the rajas of Natore and Burdwan. In every *kachari* of the large zamindars, ta'ziah processions were taken out, accompanied by music. Such ta'ziah processions drew the attention of foreign visitors, many of whom drew sketches of these processions.

**Sunnī** a derivative from the Arabic word *Sunnah*, which means customs, rites, norms, behaviour etc. The Sunni sect has a number of sub groups, such as the followers of the *Mukallid-fiqhi* imams (eg, imams of the four *madhabs*), *Salafis* and *Ahl-E-HADITH*, to whom *Gayar Mukallid-Madhab* is not acceptable, and some minor groups who follow scrupulously the literal meaning of *Ahl'uj Jahib*, *QURAN* and *HADITH*.

**Relationship between Hindus and Muslims:**

Both Hindus and Muslims are lived mannerly and pleasantly. Akbar was not an orthodox Muslims of the rigid type. He showed great respect for Hindu’s sentiments. Akbar discouraged child marriage and encourage widow remarrge among the Hindu.
The religious freedom under the Mughals brought the Hindus and the Muslims closer. Their dress, food habits, language and family pursuits were like those of the Hindus. This increased the Hindu-Muslim friendship. By and by, they began to influence the customs of each other. The Sufi saints had many Hindu followers. The Bhakti Movement also laid stress on common bonds of humanity. The Bhakti reformers too attracted followers from the Hindus and the Muslims. The high families among the Hindus began to copy the Mughal style in dress as well as in food habits.

The intermixing of different religious trends ultimately, resulted in the rise of two important movements, i.e., the Sufi Movement and the Bhakti Movement.

**SUFISM AND ITS TEACHINGS:**

The Sufis came from Persia. They settled in various parts of India. They did not believe in feasts, fasts and rituals. They believed in love and devotion as a means of coming close to God. The principles of Sufism were:

(i) God is One and all-powerful. All men and His children.

(ii) If one truly loves God then one comes nearer to God and to one's own fellow-men.

(iii) Prayers, fasts and rituals were not as important as the true love of God.

People should follow the teachings of a pir, who was like the Hindu guru. Hazrat Khwaja Muin-ud-Din Chishti, Hazrat Khwaja Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh are some important reformers of Sufism.

**BHAKTI MOVEMENT:**

The word ‘Bhakti’ means devotion or love to God. Its teachers did not believe in caste distinction or class hatred. They believed in the brotherhood of mankind. Ramanuja, Ramananda, Kabir, Namdeva are some of the important reformers of Bhakti movement.
The greatest achievement of Akbar lay in particularly helping the growth of national spirit and nations by uniting diverse castes, religious and kingdoms into a common unity. He was the first Muslim ruler who turned his attention to bringing about unity in the country and building a nation by giving up narrow-mindedness and adopting a policy of religious toleration. He was, of course, successful in his efforts to a great extent. During the period of Sultans of Delhi, Muslims were the favourite children of the State, the Hindus were turned into hewers of wood and drawers of water. Akbar abandoned the policy of Delhi Sutans’ bigotry and religious intolerance and concentrated his attention to remove the social differences and mutual conflicts among the Indians and creating in them spirit of one nation. Akbar tried to effect uniformity in every Indian field, such as, political, cultural, social economic and even religious.

Places of religious and cultural interest abound in Bihar. Nalanda is the seat of the ancient and celebrated Nalanda Buddhist monastic centre; the nearby Rajgir Hills area, with its ancient and contemporary temples and shrines, is visited by people of many faiths; and Pawapuri is the place where Mahavira, the renowned teacher of Jainism, attained nirvana (enlightenment, or freedom from an endless cycle of reincarnation). Gaya is an important place of Hindu pilgrimage, and nearby Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha attained enlightenment, is the holiest place.

‘Din-i-lahi’:  
Akbar tied to make the people of different religions live in amity and with concord. He granted all his subjects full religious freedom and thus greatly encouraged the rise of idea of uniformity. Akbar founded a common religion, ‘Din-i-lahi’ in which he combined most of the virtues of all the religions prevalent in the country, so that his subjects lived in a peaceful and friendly atmosphere. Though he could not achieve considerable success in this direction, he succeeded in winning the hearts and loyalty of the Indian people and filly earned the title of the ‘National King’ of India.

The society was divided into three main groups. King, nobles and mansabdars formed the upper class. They lived a life of
luxury. The other group was that of the **middle class**. It consisted of traders, the government officials, etc. They led a simple life. The third was the **lower class**. It consisted of farmers, artisans and labourers. They were poor people who worked hard to earn their livelihood.

**The Position of the Hindus:**

The Hindu upper classes undoubtedly shared in the material culture of the Mughals, for, as already noted, they had a virtual monopoly of trade and finance. Furthermore, they had long held many high posts in the government. The contrast between the position of Hindus under the Mughals and of Indians in general under the British was often made by Indian historians during the period of the nationalist movement. Thus a Hindu historian writing in 1940 could argue that "under Shah Jahan Hindus occupied a higher status in the government than that occupied by the Indians today."(15)

The vitality of the Hindus was shown in more than their ability to maintain footholds within administrative and commercial life. Widespread religious movements, having, as we have seen, their roots partly in the vivifying contacts of Hinduism with Islam, had produced a religious enthusiasm among the masses that was transforming the older Brahmanical religion.

Although Muslim historians ignore this religious revival among the Hindus, there is enough evidence to indicate its importance during Mughal rule. The new regional literature of Bengal and Maharashtra, which owed much to the new movement, is a clear mirror of what was taking place in Hindu society. In Bengal, there was not only the rise of a new literature, but numerous temples were built during the late seventeenth century. (16). The significance of this phenomenon becomes clear if it is remembered that practically throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, Aurangzeb was on the throne. His alleged ceaseless campaign of temple destruction obviously could have been neither thoroughgoing nor universal.
The developments in intellectual life were even more marked. The rise of Navadipa as a great center of Sanskritic learning, and the vogue of navyanyaya (new logic) belong to this period.

**Position of Muslims:**

The Muslim aristocrats lived in great houses decorated with rich hangings and carpets. Their clothing was made of finest cotton or silk, decorated with gold; and they carried beautiful scimitars. There was a considerable element of ostentatious display involved in this, however, for their domestic arrangements did not match the outward splendor of their dress and equipment. Manucci, a keen observer, refers to Pathans who came to court "well-clad and well-armed, caracolling on fine horses richly caparisoned and followed by several servants," but when they reached home, divested themselves of "all this finery, and tying a scanty cloth around their loins and wrapping a rag around their head, they take their seat on a mat, and live on ... rice and lentils or badly cooked cow's flesh of low quality, which is very abundant in the Mogul country and very cheap." (15)

The courtly manners and the elaborate etiquette of the Muslim upper classes impressed foreign visitors. In social gatherings they spoke "in a very low voice with much order, moderation, gravity, and sweetness. ... Betel and betelnut were presented to the visitors and they were escorted with much civility at the time of departure. Rigid forms were observed at meals. ... Dice was their favourite indoor game. Polo or chaugan—for which there was a special playground at Dacca—elephant-fights, hunting, excursions and picnics, were also very popular." (16) The grandees rode in palkis, preceded by uniformed mounted servants. Many "drove in fine two-wheeled carts, carved with gilt and gold, covered in silk, and drawn by two little bulls which could race with the fastest horses."

In relation to Islam, Hinduism exhibited a new vigor, greater self-confidence, and even a spirit of defiance. Hinduism is not generally thought of as a missionary religion, and it is often assumed that during Muslim rule conversions were only from Hinduism to Islam. This is, however, not true. Hinduism by now
was very much on the offensive and was absorbing a number of Muslims. When Shah Jahan returned from Kashmir, in the sixth year of his reign, he discovered that Hindus of Bhadauri and Bhimbar were forcibly marrying Muslim girls and converting them to the Hindu faith. At death these women were cremated according to the Hindu rites. Jahangir had tried to stop this practice but with no success, and Shah Jahan also issued orders declaring such marriages unlawful. Four thousand such conversions are said to have been discovered. Many cases were also found in Gujarat and in parts of the Punjab. Partly to deal with such cases, and partly to conform to his early notions of an orthodox Muslim king, Shah Jahan established a special department to deal with conversions. After the tenth year of his reign, he seems to have ceased trying to prevent the proselytizing activities of the Hindus. There are several later cases of the conversion of Muslims, not recorded by the court historians. A number of Muslims—including at least two Muslim nobles, Mirza Salih and Mirza Haider—were converted to Hinduism by the vairagis, the wandering ascetics of the Chaitanya movement, which had become a powerful religious force in Bengal. There were also cases of conversions from Islam to Sikhism. When Guru Hargovind took up his residence at Kiratpur in the Punjab some time before 1645, he is said to have succeeded in converting a large number of Muslims. It was reported that not a Muslim was left between the hills near Kiratpur and the frontiers of Tibet and Khotan. His predecessor, Guru Arjan, had proselytized so actively that he incurred Jahangir's anger, and, as Jahangir mentions in his autobiography, the Hindu shrines of Kangra and Mathura attracted a number of Muslim pilgrims.

The Hindu position was so strong that in some places Aurangzeb's order for the collection of jizya was defied. On January 29, 1693, the officials in Malwa sent a soldier to collect jizya from a zamindar called Devi Singh. When he reached the place, Devi Singh's men fell upon him, pulled his beard and hair, and sent him back empty-handed. The emperor thereupon ordered a reduction in the jagir of Devi Singh. Earlier, another official had fared much worse. He himself proceeded to the jagir to collect the tax, but was killed by the Hindu mansabdar. Orders to destroy newly built temples met with similar opposition. A Muslim officer
who was sent in 1671 to destroy temples at the ancient pilgrimage city of Ujjain was killed in a riot that broke out as he tried to carry out his orders.

Muslim historians, in order to show the extreme orthodoxy of Aurangzeb, have recorded many reports of temple destruction. On a closer scrutiny, however, there seem to be good grounds for believing that all the reports were not correct, and that quite often no action was taken on imperial orders. We read, for example, about the destruction of a certain temple at Somnath during the reign of Shah Jahan and again under Aurangzeb. It is likely that in this and in many similar cases, the temple was not destroyed on the first order. According to accounts by English merchants, Aurangzeb’s officers would leave the temples standing on payment of large sums of money by the priests. (18) However, new temples whose construction had not been authorized were often closed.

If the situation is closely examined, it appears that the complaint of Shaikh Ahmad that under Muslim rule as it existed in India, Islam was in need of greater protection than other religions does not appear to have been completely unfounded. Aurangzeb tried, of course, to reverse this trend, and some other rulers also had occasional spells of Islamic zeal, either from political or religious causes. But by and large, it is perhaps fair to say that during Muslim rule, Islam suffered from handicaps which almost outweighed the advantages it enjoyed as the religion of the ruling dynasty. This paradox becomes understandable if the basic Muslim political theory is kept in mind, under which the non-Muslim communities, so long as they paid certain taxes, were left to manage their own affairs. This local and communal autonomy severely circumscribed the sovereignty of the Muslim state, and in most matters the caste guilds and the village panchayats exercised real sovereignty, which they naturally utilized to safeguard their creed and way of life. It was this power which enabled them to evade, or even defy, unwelcome orders from the capital. A curious light on the situation is thrown by the penalties and economic losses which a Hindu had to suffer on the adoption of Islam.
Practically until the end of Muslim rule, a Hindu who became a Muslim automatically lost all claim to ancestral property. (19)

This extraordinary position was a natural result of the application of Hindu law, which, according to the Muslim legal system, governed Hindu society even under Muslim government, and under which apostacy resulted in disinherance. Shah Jahan, who began as an orthodox Muslim, tried to redress the balance by issuing orders that "family pressure should not prevent a Hindu from being admitted to Islam," and laid down that a convert should not be disinherited. Whether these orders could overcome the subtle but solid pressure of the joint family system and the power of the caste panchayats must remain a matter of speculation. The question, however, of handicaps or advantages of one community against another is not of fundamental significance. The important fact is that during normal times conditions of tolerance prevailed. This was of special interest to European visitors, almost all of whom commented on the concessions enjoyed by non-Muslims under Muslim rule. The Jesuits were critical of this policy of tolerance, declaring the destruction of Hindu temples by Muslims "a praiseworthy action," but noting their "carelessness" in allowing public performance of Hindu sacrifices and religious practices. When Akbar granted the followers of the Rauhasaniya sect the freedom to follow their religion, Monserrate sadly commented that "He cared little that in allowing everyone to follow his own religion he was in reality violating all religions." (20)

Even in Aurangzeb's reign a cow could not be slaughtered in important places like Surat, and attempts made by some English merchants to obtain beef led to riots. According to one account: "In Surat the Hindus paid a fixed sum to the Mohammadans in return for sparing the cows. In 1608 a riot was caused at Surat by a drunken sailor Tom Tucker who killed a calf. Similar occurrences at Karwar and Honavar led to outbreaks, in one of which the whole factory was murdered. (21) But nothing brings out the Mughal administration's respect for the susceptibilities of the Hindus as well as the experience of the Portuguese missionary traveler, Manrique. "In a village where he stopped for the night,
one of his followers, a Musalman, killed two peacocks, birds sacred in the eyes of Hindus, and did his best to conceal the traces of his deed by burying their feathers. The sacrilege was, however, detected, the whole party arrested, and the offender sentenced to have a hand amputated, though this punishment was eventually commuted to a whipping by the local official, who explained that the emperor had taken an oath that he and his successors would let the Hindus live under their own laws and customs and tolerate no breach of them." (22)

Although the Mughals interfered little with Hindu customs, there was one ancient practice which they sought to stop. This was sati, or the custom of widows, particularly those of the higher classes, burning themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres. Akbar had issued general orders prohibiting sati, and in one noteworthy case, personally intervened to save a Rajput princess from immolating herself on the bier of her husband. Similar efforts continued to be made in the succeeding reigns. According to the European traveler Pelsaert, governors did their best to dissuade widows from immolating themselves, but by Jahangir's orders were not allowed to withhold their sanction if the woman persisted. (23)

**Urban Life:**

All foreign travelers speak of the wealth and prosperity of Mughal cities and large towns. Monserrate stated that Lahore in 1581 was "not second to any city in Europe or Asia." Finch, who traveled in the early days of Jahangir, found both Agra and Lahore to be much larger than London, and his testimony is supported by others. Other cities like Surat ("A city of good quantity, with many fair merchants and houses therein"), Ahmadabad, Allahabad, Benares, and Patna similarly excited the admiration of visitors. (24)

The efficient system of city government under the Mughals encouraged trade. The pivot of urban administration was the kotwal, the city governor. In addition to his executive and judicial powers, it was his duty to prevent and detect crime, to perform
many of the functions now assigned to the municipal boards, to regulate prices, and in general, to be responsible for the peace and prosperity of the city. The efficient discharge of these duties depended on the personality of the individual city governor, but the Mughals tried to ensure high standards by making the kotwal personally responsible for the property and the security of the citizens. Akbar had decreed (probably following Sher Shah Suri's example of fixing the responsibility on village chiefs for highway robberies in their territory) that the kotwal was to either recover stolen goods or be held responsible for their loss. That this was not only a pious hope is borne out by the testimony of several foreign travelers who state that the kotwal was personally liable to make good the value of any stolen property which he was unable to recover. The kotwals often found pretexts to evade the ultimate responsibility, but in general they took elaborate measures to prevent thefts.

Most of this flourishing commerce was in the hands of the traditional Hindu merchant classes, whose business acumen was proverbial. Their caste guilds added to the skills in trade and commerce that they had learned through the centuries. Not only were their disputes settled by their panchayats, but they would frequently impose pressure on the government by organized action. Foreign visitors record that the governors and kotwals were very sensitive to this, and in spite of hardships inseparable from a despotic system of administration, the business communities had their own means of obtaining redress. Bernier, writing during Aurangzeb's time, declared that the Hindus possessed "almost exclusively the trade and wealth of the country." (25) If Muslims enjoyed advantages in higher administrative posts and in the army, Hindu merchants maintained the monopoly in trade and finance that they had had during the sultanate. (26) Banking was almost exclusively in Hindu hands. In the years of the decline of the Mughals, a rich Hindu banker would finance his favorite rival claimant for the throne.

**Rural Conditions:**

Conditions in the rural areas during the Mughal period were much the same as at present, with one important difference—the
Muslim rulers had scarcely disturbed the old organization of the villages. The panchayats continued to settle most disputes, with the state impinging very little on village life, except for the collection of land revenue, and even this was very often done on a village basis rather than through individuals, with the age-old arrangements being preserved. The incidence of land revenue was substantially higher under the Mughals and in Hindu states like Vijayanagar than in British India, but the administration was more flexible, both in theory and in practice, in its assessment and collection. Apart from the remission of land revenue when crops failed, there was reduction in government demand even when bumper crops caused prices to fall. For example, between 1585 and 1590 very large sums had to be written off because a series of exceptionally good harvests had resulted in a surplus, and peasants could not sell their crops. The state also advanced loans to the cultivators, and occasionally provided seed as well as implements for digging wells. Loans advanced to the cultivators for seeds, implements, bullocks, or digging of wells were called *taqavi*—an expression which has continued in modern land revenue administration.

**Health and Medical Facilities:**

The Mughal emphasis on physical fitness and encouragement of out-of-door manly games also raised the general standard of health. The ideal was that everyone was to be trained to be a soldier, a good rider, a keen shikari, and able to distinguish himself in games. Public hospitals have been extended during the Mughal period. Jahangir states in his autobiography that on his accession to the throne he ordered the establishment, at government expense, of hospitals in large cities. That this order was actually made effective is shown by the records of salaries paid by the government and of grants for the distribution of medicine. (27)

The greatness of the Mughals consisted in part at least in the fact that the influence of their court and government permeated society, giving it a new measure of harmony. The common people suffered from poverty, disease, and the oppression of the powerful; court life was marked by intrigue and cruelty as well as by
refinement of taste and elegant manners. Yet the rulers and their officials had moral standards which gave coherence to the administration and which they shared to some extent with most of their subjects. Undeniably, there were ugly scars on the face of Mughal society, but the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had a quality of life that lent them a peculiar charm. The clearest reflection of this is seen in the creative arts of the period.

**Mançabdár:**

In the contingent of a Commander (28) (*mançabdár*) of Ten Thousand, other *mançabdárs* as high as *Hazáris* (Commanders of One Thousand) serve; in the contingent of a Commander of Eight Thousand, Mançabdárs up to *Hashtçadís* (Commanders of Eight Hundred) serve; in the contingent of a Commander of Seven Thousand, Mançabdárs up to Haftçadís (Commanders of Seven Hundred) serve; in the contingent of a Commander of Five Thousand, other Mançabdárs as high *Pançadís* (commanders of Five Hundred) serve; and in the contingent of a *Pançadí*, Mançabdárs as high as *Çadís* (Commanders of One Hundred) serve. Mançabdárs of lower ranks do not serve in the contingents of high Mançabdárs.

In order to organize his civil and military personnel, Akbar devised a system of ranks, or *manabs*, based on the “decimal” system of army organization used by the early Delhi sultans and the Mongols. The *manabdârs* (rank holders) were numerically graded from commanders of 10 to commanders of 5,000. Although they fell under the jurisdiction of the *mîr bakhshî*, each owed direct subordination to the emperor.

The Mughal emperor, however, asserted his right as a “paramount.” He treated the Rajput chiefs as zamindars (landholders), not as rulers. Like all local zamindars, they paid tribute, submitted to the Mughals, and received a patent of office. Akbar thus obtained a wide base for Mughal power among thousands of Rajput warriors who controlled large and small parcels of the countryside throughout much of his empire.
The Mughal nobility came to comprise mainly the Central Asians (Tūrānīs), Iranians (Irānīs), Afghans, Indian Muslims of diverse subgroups, and Rajputs. Both historical circumstances and a planned imperial policy contributed to the integration of this complex and heterogeneous ruling class into a single imperial service. The emperor saw to it that no single ethnic or religious group was large enough to challenge his supreme authority.

The Zamindārs of the country furnish more than four millions, four hundred thousand men. Zamindars developed a system of zamindari management of their own through their privileged hereditary position and built up their courts and a style of private life vying with each other in pomp and grandeur.

Yūzbāshīs (Commanders of One Hundred) are of eleven classes. The first class contains such as furnish one hundred troopers. Their monthly salary is 700 Rupees. The eleventh class contains such as have no troops of their own in accordance with the statement made above, that Dākhīlī troops are now-a-days preferred. This class gets 500 Rupees. The nine intermediate classes have monthly allowances decreasing from 700 Rupees by 20 Rupees for every ten troopers which they furnish less.

In the live stock accounts of the Dúbístís, the fixed number of Turki and Janglah horses, and of elephants, is not enforced. For Commanders of Thirty and Twenty, four horses are reckoned, generally Mujannas, rarely Yābūs; and Dabhāshīs are excused the Turki horse, though their salaries remain as before.

Social Customs:

The marriage customs of Hindus and Muslims had many similarities. Early marriages were much in vogue amongst the Hindus, with seven considered the proper age for a girl to be married. To leave a daughter unmarried beyond twelve years of age was to risk the displeasure of one’s caste. The Muslims also betrothed their children between the ages of six and eight, but the marriage was generally not solemnized before they had attained the age of puberty.
Among the wealthier classes polygamy and divorce are said to have been very common. The custom of excluding women, known as purdah, was very strictly observed. Marriage negotiations were undertaken by the professional broker or the friends of either party. The marriage ceremonies were more or less the same as they are at present, and the character of the average Indian or Pakistani home and the socio-ethical ideas which influence it have not undergone any fundamental change. The son's duty to his parents and the wife's duty to her husband were viewed almost as religious obligations. "Superstitions played a prominent part in the daily life of the people. Charms were used not merely to ensnare a restive husband but also to secure such other ends as the birth of a son or cure of a disease. The fear of the evil eye was ever present and the young child was considered particularly susceptible. People believed in all sorts of omens." (30) Astrologers were very much in demand, even at the Mughal court.

The Muslim aristocrats lived in great houses decorated with rich hangings and carpets. Their clothing was made of finest cotton or silk, decorated with gold; and they carried beautiful scimitars. There was a considerable element of ostentatious display involved in this, however, for their domestic arrangements did not match the outward splendor of their dress and equipment. Manucci, a keen observer, refers to Pathans who came to court "well-clad and well-armed, caparisoned on fine horses richly caparisoned and followed by several servants," but when they reached home, divested themselves of "all this finery, and tying a scanty cloth around their loins and wrapping a rag around their head, they take their seat on a mat, and live on rice and lentils or badly cooked cow's flesh of low quality, which is very abundant in the Mogul country and very cheap." (31)

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NOTES AND REFERENCES:


3. A'in, V-III. Page 279.


10. A'in, V-III. Page 288.


15. Raychaudhuri, pp. 200–03.


18. For a fuller account, see Sharma, pp. 90–92, 165–74.


23. O'Malley, p. 22.


32. Raychaudhuri, pp. 200–03.
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