Chapter 6

Socio-Cultural Scene
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The Mughal Empire underwent the process of disintegration in the 18th century accompanied by the collapse of its whole military and administrative structure. However the Mughal culture attained its most fully developed forms and continued to exercise a tremendous influence on the contemporary society for a long time to come.

The Mughal nobles, governors and local chieftains were primarily moved by the ambition of gaining political power, but they also combined the life of court and camp with a passion for intellectual pursuits for poetry, music, philosophy and science. At the same time there emerged religious and mystic movements which contributed to the moral transformation of society and growth of a cosmopolitan outlook among the people. Nadir shah was so deeply impressed by the elegant arts of India that he chose to take with him a number of artists, musicians, dancing girls, physicians and architects.¹

The Muslims of India who were assimilated into the vast cultural complex of the country, adopted native languages for common use in day-to-day life. Though Persian remained the literary and official

¹ Zahiruddin Mallick, p. 343.
language till such time as it was dethroned by Urdu. They learnt Hindi dialects, like Braja Bhasha and Awadhi and their poets, saints and artists used them in expressing their ideas and feelings. “The devotional character of Hindi songs and the appeal which the language made to the Sufis brought Hindus and Muslims closer together than any other influence”. The Muslims also took a prominent part in the development of regional languages and literatures such as Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati and Sindhi. The growth of Urdu which took place during the long span of time from the 13th to the 18th centuries represents a process of linguistic and cultural synthesis, an admixture of Hindi grammar, Persian script and Arabic Persian vocabulary. The language grew into a rich and effective medium of expression for values and concepts common to both Hindus and Muslims. In the domain of art heterogeneous items took a more and more congruous shape, making its landscape pleasant and beautiful. Thus, “an endless process of absorption, assimilation and adjustment of diverse elements and tendencies has gone for centuries giving shape and complexion to the cultural tradition of India”.

In describing the cultural milieu of the period special attention may be given to the extravagant and ostentations lifestyle of the elite and the position they occupied in society.

The Mughal nobles imitated their masters in their extravagant life of sensuality and pageantry. “When the Mogul government was in the plentitude of its power”, observed William Hodges, “it was an object with the Omrahs or great Lords of the Court, to hold captive in their Zanana (female apartments) even hundreds of females, collected from various quarters of empire, and particularly so from cashmire, a country famous for the beauty of its women”. The nobles amassed wealth at the expense of the state, especially in times when there was a weak man at the helm of affairs. For instance, during the reign of Farrukh Siyar, the Saiyid brothers acquired property worth a crore (ten million) rupees.

The literature of the period is replete with references to the indulgence by nobles in all manner of sensual pleasure. Even if we make due allowance for poetic exaggeration, Mir Taqi Mir’s observations on the luxurious life of nobles cannot be dismissed lightly.

Qutb ul Mulk Abdullah Khan is said to have been much addicted to the company of women. ‘Saiyid Abdullah Khan’, remarks

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Khafi Khan, "had procured innumerable beautiful fairy faced women, and concubines." He adds: "Abdullah Khan was much attached to the women and was a debauche. He included two or three most beautiful women belonging to the royal haram in his own female apartments. He collected seventy to eighty choicest and most beautiful and fascinating women, and in their company he passed most of his time in ratifying his animal desires." Similarly, Zulfiqar Khan who was Wazir under Jahandar shah was plunged deep in dissipation. Earlier, Munim Khan Khan-i Khana, noble of the reign of Bahadur Shah I, amassed so much wealth that on his demise, goods and cash amounting to three crores of rupees were recovered from his house.

The Majlis-i Yazdahum (the death anniversary of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani) organized by Wazir ul Mamalik, Qamaruddin Khan, presented a vivid picture of the luxurious life of the nobles. Dargah Quli Khan observes as follows: He celebrates the eleventh day of every month, and the dancing girls, musicians and mimics are invited to entertain the participants by their performances. Amir-ul Umara Husain Ali Khan possessed fabulous wealth. Three hundred carts loaded

9. He was Wazir under Bahadur Shah I. For biographical notice see Maasirul Umara III, pp. 667-676.
with gold coins and untold silver coins were recovered from his house following his assassination.\textsuperscript{12} He used to spend a good deal of money on the upkeep of his household and on dancing-girls and music parties; so much so that even his huge income did not suffice.\textsuperscript{13}

The luxurious style of living of the nobles became so serious a source of moral degeneration of the rank and file of Muslim society that Yahya Khan in sheer despair prayed to God, saying:

"O God, inspire the Khalifa of the world and the umara (nobles) and hukkam (bureaucracy) of the Empire to devote themselves to the welfare of the common people and to make the country prosperous. Let them keep themselves busy in suppressing the refractory and disobedient elements, in supporting the weak and the old, in dispensing justice, in restoring the divine laws of Islam, in stamping out infidelity, and in reviving the honour of the prophet and his successors".\textsuperscript{14}

Not that there were no nobles of a pious and virtuous kind. It is said of Nizam-ul Mulk Asafjah\textsuperscript{15}, for examples that he strictly adhered to the awamir-wa-nawahi of Islam (do’s and don’ts) and passed some of his time in discussion with the ulama and the mashaikh. After his

\textsuperscript{12} Ahwalul Khawaqin, f. 177a.

\textsuperscript{13} Maasir-ul Umara, I, p. 320. For a detailed account of the Wealth which he secured from the fort of Agra after the fall of Nekusiyar, see Khafi Khan II, p. 387.

\textsuperscript{14} Tazkiratul Muluk, f. 140a.

\textsuperscript{15} For his character, see, Khafi Khan II, pp. 747-50; Masirul Umara III, pp. 837-48.
morning prayers he attended to matters of state. In the afternoon, he offered his zuhr and asr prayer in company with Muslims, recited the Quran, read books on hadis. Thereafter he attended on mystic and pious men.

He was much devoted to the Saiyids, who claimed to be members of the families of the Prophet and holy Imams. Similarly Saadat Khan Burhan-ul Mulk is credited with having been endowed with angelic virtues. He was a lover of justice. He was a brave soldier and a generous well-wisher of his soldiers. He was also devoted to religion. He observed the prescribed fasts, performed namaz and recited the Quran.

The nobles of the period maintained bands of singers and dancers. It is reported that Husain Ali Khan spent as enormous amount of money on them. Khushhali Ram Jani, a famous dancing girl of Delhi, was attached to the court of Qamaruddin Khan.

The general character of the Mughal nobility of the period was complex one, being compressed of both virtues and vices. Religion and worldiness went side by side.

17. For details see Maasir ul Umara, I, p. 320.
18. Muraqqa-i Delhi, p. 77.
Raushan-ud Daula celebrated the urs of Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki with great pomp and splendour. Both sides of the road from old Delhi to the shrine (situated at Mehrauli), were illuminated. It is said that two lakhs of rupees were spent on the lights and on the food for *fatiha*.\(^{19}\) Husain Ali Khan and Abdullah Khan too celebrated the feasts of *Yazdahum* and *duwazdahum*. It is recorded that Husain Ali Khan\(^{20}\) used to send large sums of money every month to most of the cities for the *Niyaz* of the Saiyids and the saints. He gave orders to all provincial governors, saying that they should spend one hundred and eleven rupees on the eleventh day of every month, on the *fatiha* of Pir Dastagir and one hundred twelve rupees on the *fatiha* of the Holy Prophet on the twelfth day of every month. He himself spent a thousand and eleven and a thousand twelve rupees on the *fatiha* of Pir Dastagir (Ghaus Pak) and Holy Prophet. An equal amount was set apart for this purpose from the Imperial treasury too. The *mashaikh*, the divines, and the *ulama* were invited. For such recluses as were not in a position to come to the feast, they sent conveyances. Also with all humility and reverence, they personally served them in the assemblies. They stood with fans in their hands to whisk off the flies.\(^{21}\)

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In the same way, Nawab Alauddaulah Motamanul Mulk Jafar Khan Nusairi (Murshid Quli Khan) of Bengal celebrated the feast of Rabi-ul-Awwal. Ghulam Husain Salim gives a detailed account of the festive aspects of the feast.\(^\text{22}\) By an order, Abdullah Khan supported Khadim vakil's position with regard to get the Nazar offered by pilgrims in general, and by Jafar Khan Nusairi in particular at the shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer. There are many documents relating to the shrine of Khwaja Sahib indicating the devotion of the Saiyid Brothers. From one of the documents it comes to light that Abdullah Khan earmarked 100 bighas of land at Ajmer for rose cultivation for the sake of offering at the shrine regularly and on the occasion of urs.\(^\text{23}\) Their link with Ajmer shrine appears strong and hereditary. Syed Abdullah Mian, F/o Syed Husain Ali Khan laid out a garden, founded a quarter (Mohalla) known as Abdullahpura where water channel was brought from Ana Sagar lake. His wife tomb of beautiful carved marbles is still a monument of class. Hassan Ali Mausoleum and grave of others family members of Saiyids in it speaks volume of their devotional connection with Ajmer.\(^\text{24}\)

The nobles at the Imperial court in Delhi and the provincial governors ordered celebrations whenever they recovered from an illness.

\(^{22}\) For details, see Riyazus Salatin, eng. Trans., p. 280.
\(^{23}\) For details see, Dr. S.L.H. Moini, *Chisti shrine of Ajmer, Pir Pilgrims Practice*, Jaipur, 2004.
\(^{24}\) Har Bilas Sarda, *Ajmer, Historical and Descriptive*, pp. 173-175.
They had a ritualistic bath to mark the occasion. They received *nazār* from officers subordinate to them. They also distributed money in the form of *sadaqa* and *khairat*. The people of the time must have found it rather difficult to draw a line between extravagance and generosity. A perusal of the records would show that most of the nobles of the period were very generous towards the poor, the *ulama*, the *Sufis*, students, scholars, poets, artists and soldiers. Husain Ali Khan was famous for his philanthropy. None of his soldiers, it was said was without gold and silver. Leaders of the contingent would go from camp to camp to tell the soldiers that they should go to the court of the Nawab and get gold and silver according to their needs, and the soldiers would reply that they had enough and they had no place for storing their wealth.

The nobles of this period often generously patronized men of letters and scholars. One Husain Ali Khan presented three lakhs of rupees and an elephant with a golden chain to Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil. Abdulah Khan held Mirza Bedil in his esteem. Twice or three times

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25. On the authority of Mir Allah Bakhsh, a close companion of Husain Ali Khan, Rustam Ali describes the character of the Nawab as follows “he kept vigil day and night, and except for his siesta he very rarely slept. He offered his five prayers in congregation and in two or three pas (six or nine hours) read the whole of the Quran. He wore a simple dress and had no liking for gaudy garments. He strictly adhered to *Shariat* and never transgressed it. *Tarikh-I Hindi*, p. 237a; Cf. *Maasir ul Umara*, I, p. 338.

26. Once Abdullah Khan distributed six lakh of rupees among the poor, following the example of Farrukh siyar, who had ordered him to distribute the same amount on his behalf. *Tarikh-i Hindi*, f. 228a. The author of Risale-i Muhammad Shah wa Khan-i Dauran tells us; “Abdullah Khan gave away his extensive state to the deserving and opened his treasury for giving daily allowances to the necessitous... The people enjoyed affluence due to his generosity”. Ibid., f. 94a.
Mirza Bedil went to meet him and the former rose from his chair to welcome him. On every occasion, he warmly received him and shook hands with him. Similarly both the Saiyid brothers were much devoted to Ikhlas Khan Wamiq\(^27\) whom they regarded their *murshid*.

Similar was the attitude of Nizam-ul Mulk Asaf Jah. There were several poets and scholars attached to his court. He had also bestowed grants for the dargah of Ajmer. Zulfiqar Khan was famous for his generosity towards poet. It is recorded that once Shaikh Nasir Ali Sarhindi a poet, composed a eulogy for him. Zulfiqar Khan rewarded him with thirty lakh of rupees together with an elephant. Even then he expressed his regret at not being able to reward him adequately for his verses.\(^28\)

Samsam-ud-Din Khan-i-Dauran rewarded a poet called Muhammad Rafi of Kashmir with a thousand rupees. Burhan-ul Mulk Saaat Khan extended patronage to many scholars and literate of his age, so did his son in-law and successor Nawab Wazir Safdar Jung. With a view to demonstrating their devotion to religion and the welfare of the people and exhibiting their power and wealth, the nobles often undertook works of public utility. They constructed, mosques,

\(^{27}\) Originally a khattari, he was a native of Kalanaur. He was converted to Islam by Maulavi Abdullah, who was an eminent alim and the father of Hakim Sialkoti. He was given the name of Ikhlas Khan.

\(^{28}\) Masirul Umara, II, p. 104.
madrasas, havelis, palaces, sarais, and tombs of saints.\textsuperscript{29} It is recorded that Amir-ul Umara Husain Ali Khan laid the foundations of a reservoir at Aurangabad which was subsequently enlarged and completed by Iwaz Khan.\textsuperscript{30} He also built a sarai, a bridge, and other works of public utility in his native Barha.\textsuperscript{31} The elegant marble tomb of their mother and mausoleum of Husian Ali Khan at Ajmer reminds people of their contribution in architecture. Qulb-ul Mulk Abdullah Khan constructed a canal in Patparganj, a suburban town in Delhi because there was acute scarcity of water in that area. This canal was connected with the main canal which supplied water to Delhi and was dug during the reign of Shah Jahan.\textsuperscript{32} Nawab Muhammad Khan Bangash laid the foundations of several townships at Farukhabad such as Shahpur, Muhammadabad, Khuda Ganj, Darya Ganj, Ali Ganj, Yaqub Ganj, Shamsher Ganj, and Kashianj. He founded the town of Farrukhabad in honour of the Emperor Muhammad Farrukhsiyar. Imad ul Daula Qamaruddin Khan, the Wazir of Muhammad Shah, used personally to supervise the construction of his new buildings.

Nizam-ul Mulk Asafjah rebuilt Gosha-i Mahal, the Chahar Mahal, and the Husaini Sagar at Haiderabad. He further rebuilt

\textsuperscript{29} For an account of the general interest of the nobles in erecting buildings and laying gardens, see Grose, A voyage to the East Indies, I, pp. 137-8.
\textsuperscript{30} He constructed a mosque at Aurangabad, in Shah Ganj area, Maasir ul Umara, II, p. 834; and Khafi Khan, II, p. 942.
\textsuperscript{31} Khafi Khan, II, pp. 941 and 942.
\textsuperscript{32} Maasir ul Umara, III, p. 140.
Nikamboli, which had been in ruin since the days of Aurangzeb. None of the earlier governors of the Deccan had even thought of repairing it. Nizam-ul Mulk spent considerable sums of money on the repair of old buildings. According to Mohammad Qasim Aurangabadi people used to say that even during the reign of Abul Hasan\textsuperscript{33}, buildings like those raised by Nizam-ul Mulk had never been constructed. The city of Aurangabad was practically re-founded by him. He also constructed the ramparts round the city.\textsuperscript{34} Ghaziuddin Khan Firoz Jung, a son of Nizamul Mulk Asaf Jah, constructed a mausoleum, a mosque, and a madrasa in Delhi.\textsuperscript{35} It is this madrasa that the Zakir Husain college in functioning today. Sharaf-ud Daula too built a mosque and a madrasa at Delhi.\textsuperscript{36} Itmad-ud Daula Mohammad Amin had a madrasa constructed outside the Ajmeri Gate in Delhi.\textsuperscript{37} At Shah-i Mardan the reputed holy foot print of Hazrat Ali is preserved. Nawab Bahadur Jawed Khan had majlis khana and a mosque constructed together with a fountain.\textsuperscript{38} Many of these nobles were spiritually linked and attached to sufi orders.

\textsuperscript{33} Abul hasan was a king of golkunda when Aurangzeb attacked the state and annexed it to his Empire. Maasir-i Alamgiri, trans, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{34} Ahwal Khwaqin, ff. 223b-225b. He founded the city of Burhanpur in 1728-29 and Nizamabad as well. He also built a mosque, a bridge, and a sarai. He built the ramparts round the city of Haiderabad and the canal called Nahr-I Rasul. Maasirul Umara, III, p. 882; Siyarul Mutakhhirin, III, p. 871.
\textsuperscript{35} Asarus Sanadid, Syed Ahmad Khan, pp. 293-4 and 300-5.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 309.
\textsuperscript{37} Tarikh-i-Hindi, f. 250a.
\textsuperscript{38} Asarus Sanadid, pp. 320-1.
specially of Chishti silsilah and wished to be buried in the precinct of famous dargahs at Delhi and outside.

In spite of the fact that the Muslim society had fallen into the whirlpool of widespread poverty from top to the bottom there was reckless display of wealth and extravagance, waste on the pursuits of pleasure, music and dance and observance of ceremonies from those having amassed wealth by corrupt practices. The insolvency (bankruptcy) of the Central government coffers, and treasuries of the nobles, had brought about general state of unemployment for all types of professional classes who earned their livelihood by attaching themselves to the courts of the kings and the nobles, the loss of peace and tranquility, law and order, which had adversely affected trade and industry, and thereby thrown the craftsmen and artisans out of employment. The private luxury and vices of the Mussulman princes, observes William Hodges, too frequently reduce them to a state of real poverty, even with large revenues and too often they delegate to artful, designing and avaricious characters, the management and the concerns of the state, and become virtually the plunderers instead of the parents of their subjects. These men, eager after their own private gain, and

39. For the insolvency of the state coffers during the reign of Aurangzeb see Niskha-i Dilkusha, ff. 84b and 141a. However, for the insolvency of the state coffers at the time of Farrukh Siyar's accession (1712-13) see Farrukh Siyar Nama, ff. 83-84a. For an account of the general state of corruption in the departments of the State, see Siyarul Mutaakhkhirin, II, pp. 826-34 and 840-42.
knowing well that their conduct will not bear the blaze of day, connive at any villainy that may be acted by those of inferior degree, many of whom are, indeed, their actual agents. Thus it is that the people at large retain no real regard for their governors, and the natural consequence is, that the princes are frequently left, in the hour of distress, quite destitute of support, and an easy prey of any invader.  

Under these circumstances, the rank and file of Indian society in general and the Muslim community in particular, whose livelihood depended mainly on state service and service under the nobles, were the worst sufferers as a consequence of the extravagance of the emperors and the nobles. As such the servants of the state and those attached to the courts of the noble in one way or the other were hard hit.

The trade and industry of the period by and large depended on the patronage of the kings and the nobles, for they were the greatest consumers of the fine goods which the middle class people could not afford to buy. Hence due to the poverty of the kings and nobles, both the arts and artisans were directly affected. For instance, the merchants who brought horses from Isfahan could not find buyers in Northern India and had to go to the Deccan to sell them. The traveling in those days was full

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40. Ratan Chand, the diwan of Saiyid Abdullah Khan, collected wealth by hook and crook for his master causing great distress to the people. Due to general complaint against the Diwan, Farrukh Siyar was compelled to ask Saiyid Abdullah Khan for his dismissal but his order was defied. Khafi Khan II, p. 773; Tarikh-i Farrukh Siyar, p. 24.

41. William Hodges, Travels in India, p. 103.
of danger and involved risk of life and property. In case they sold their horses to any noble, the bargaining was made in such a way as if the horses were stolen property. Even if the price was settled and letter of payment was issued, the amil did not pay the amount saying that he had no money to make the payment. On the return from the office of the amil, the merchants found both the horses and the money were lost.42

The peasants were not free from worries. The vagaries of nature and the fear of draught haunted their minds all the time and so much so there had always been a possibility of their being confiscated due to the non-payment of the land revenues, which caused great insecurity to them.

There were many a poet in this period earning their livelihood by composing poems and by joining the courts of the kings and nobles. On that account they were generally regarded as well off, but in fact, as Sauda himself records, they too were hard hit owing to the economic crisis with which the ruling class suffered. Therefore, the poets like other professional classes, had fallen on the thorns of life. The teachers had lost their former respect. The Maktabs were deserted as there were few students to be taught. The Masnavi recitors were paid barely two rupees. The preachers imparted lessons to the students in the day and

42. Kulliyat-i-Sauda, 1, p. 365.
maintained the accounts of someone in the night, as if he was a teacher of mathematics. Besides he had to suffer great insults and hardships from the misbehaviour of the students, who put thorns under the carpet on which the teacher sat.43

The calligraphers, who at the heyday of the Mughal rule, were highly paid for their art of calligraphy, had now fallen into the bad days and were compelled by the circumstances to write hundred verses calligraphy in one paisa. There was none to appreciate such an art.44

The profession of the false Shaikhship (saintship) was regarded very lucrative and they passed their lives in affluency, as they received gifts and presents from their disciples and devoted common people. Since the period under study saw the rise of pseudo-saints, therefore this profession, too lost its glamour. The literature of the period is replete with condemnation of those false saints. The poet ridiculed them and compared a saint’s turban to a donkey’s tail; others compared it to a cupola. The shaikhs had thus fallen on evil days and were at a loss to earn enough even to keep body and soul together.45 Yet real sufi saints enjoyed respect of emperors nobles, ruling elites and even of common masses. Shah Fakhruddin Delhavi who ushered in a renaissance of

43. Ibid., I, p. 366.
44. Ibid., I, p. 366.
45. Ibid., I, p. 366.
chistiya order was always held in high esteem by the people and had thousands of murid irrespective of caste, colour and creed. He had even allowed his non muslim disciple to recite wazaif (Latinies). Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Jaban, Khwaja Mir Dard etc. were the other famous sufi saints of the time who earned respect from the people.

Nizam ul Mulk Asaf Jah and his family was closely attached to Shah Fakhruddin Dehlavi, while Abdus Samad Khan, Raushan ud Daula were the followers of Shah Bhik and Shah Miran.

Muslim jurists, theologians and scholars were also watching the political developments with keen interest and wanted to reform the society. Shah Waliullah was one of them who was of the opinion that the Muslim nobility should change their standard of moral and ethical values so that the common man may or should also imitate them.

Thus all the professional classes were literally thrown on the streets. Not only Mir Taqi Mir but almost all the poets of the period have bemoaned neglect of the arts and the artists.46

Hard pressed by penury, many famous poets, scholars and men of art of Delhi migrated to the provincial towns in the hope of making sure of two square meals a day. Khan Arzu, Sauda, Mir, Insha, Jurat, Mushafi, Jafar Ali Hasrat and others left Delhi for Lucknow. In his

autobiography Zikr-i Mir, and other verses Mir depicts his own appalling and wretched condition.

In the same way the author of Risala-I Muhammad Shah-wa Khan-i Dauran, gives a heart rending account of the thirty six professional classes which were more or less in the same plight as the poets of the period.\textsuperscript{47} Unemployment was widespread at all levels of Muslim society. It was the most vital problem which the Muslims of 18\textsuperscript{th} century had to face without any hope of immediate remedial steps from the government, which was bankrupt.

Enumerating the main causes of the wretched condition of the masses, Shah Waliullah says that the foremost cause was heavy taxation. Without such taxation the nobles could not have enough money for their extravagances. This taxation broke the backbone of the peasantry, as well as of the artisans and the merchants. Land revenue and octroi duties were the main sources of income for the kings and their nobles. Their ever-mounting expenses and spendthrift ways of life led to exorbitant exactions.\textsuperscript{48}

Apart from the general insecurity and virtual paralysis of the administrative machinery, blatant injustice, and victimization, the

\textsuperscript{47} Risala-i Muhammad shah wa Khan-i Dauran, ff. 159a-83a.
\textsuperscript{48} Hajjatiullah-ul Baligha, Urdu Trans I, p. 163.
society of the day was plagued by unprecedented corruption all levels of the bureaucracy. Indeed it affected the economic condition of the masses. Even in the capital city of Delhi, there was much insecurity of life and property; so much so that people could not sleep peacefully during the nights.49

Thus one could see the wretched economic condition of the people everywhere in the country in general and in the city of Delhi in particular, having been subject to attacks and massacres at the hands of Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and the Rohillas.

No wonder, when Twining visited the city of Delhi in 1794, he too found it in the grip of destruction and poverty. Wherever he went, he happened to pass through the ruins of old monuments and mausoleums:

“The decline of the empire was visible in the tombs as well as in the palaces of the Emperors”.50

The life of the common people in the 18th century was by and large replica of the kings and the nobility. As we have already seen both the kings and the peerage of the period wallowed in the mud of debauchery and dissipation. Naturally their influence filtered down and

49. For details, see Kulliyat-I Sauda, I, pp. 378-71; For an account of the widespread practice of bribery. See, Siyarat Mutaakhirin, II, p. 488.
50. Twining, Travels in India, pp. 242-55.
in the rank and file of Muslim society, even places for off from the capital. The streets of Delhi reflected the life of the court and the nobles. After giving a detached account of the profligate life of the emperor Jahandar Shah, Khafi Khan throws light on the people of the period he remarks:

The unstable and transitory reign of Jahander Shah strengthened the foundations of cruelty and prevarication. The vocal and instrumental music and the dance of qawwals, the kalawants and the dharis become so popular that it became almost impossible that the qazi should turn out to be a distiller of spirit or that the mufti should emerge as drunkard.51

The cities and towns of North India in general and Delhi, Faizabad, Lucknow, Najbabd, Murshidabad and Azimabad in particular were dens of vice on the one hand and of piety and religiousness on the other hand. In every city there were large number of khanqahs (hospices), madrasas and mosques, as also brothels and gambling dens. The pimps were active in every nook and corner. There was a great contradiction in the attitudes of the people in general. They flocked to the khanqahs and the shrines with devotion and visited the brothels too

51. Khafi Khan II, p. 689. Nuruddin corroborates the above statement of Khafi Khan. According to him the qazis and officers of lower rank spread the carpet of sensual pleasure deeply engrossed in listening to music and in witnessing dances. The popularity of dance and music was so great that one heard nothing but the songs of dancing girls and noisy brawls of drinkards in every quarter of the city. From the king to the soldiers, from the faqir to the wazir, everyone was emboldened enough to indulge. Drinking was popular in every section of Muslim society. For the general life of the Muslims of Delhi see, Muraqqa-i Delhi.
with enthusiasm. Thus sin and action of religion went side by side, more or less in a balanced way. When the situation became very alarming, Shah Waliullah in sheer disgust wrote to Ahmad Shah Abdali, saying that if the process of sin and inquity could not be checked immediately and if its course was not channelled in other constructive directions, the Muslims would soon be unstable to differentiate between Islam and 

kufr.$^{52}$

Mirza Muhammad Bakhsh Ashab tells us that during the reign of Muhammad Shah, the emperor and the Wazir. The young and the old, the highest and lowest all became devotees of sensual pleasure. They shunned the hard military life and gave themselves over the case and comfort after the battle of Hasanpur in 1721. The people too devoted themselves to marry making.$^{53}$

Thus, on the whole the period under review presented horrible picture of moral degeneration. The manifestations of obscenity crossed all reasonable bounds.

A careful study of Muruqqa-i Delhi and other contemporary literature would show that the common people of Delhi hankered for a life of sensual pleasure. Opportunities for the pursuit of such pleasures

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$^{52}$ Shah Waliullah Key Siyasi Maktubat, p. 52.
$^{53}$ Munshi KhushLal Chand tells us that the people forgot their duty of obedience's of God. They switched their allegiance to sensual pleasure. Tarikh-i Muhammad Shahi, f.6a.
were afforded by the fairs held annually at Hindu temples or at the shrines of Muslim saints.\(^{54}\)

*Muraqqa-i Delhi* also refers to several examples of the immorality which had crept into Muslim society. It was as if the Muslims of those days had lost their self respect together Dargah Qui Khan gives us an eye witness account of the profligate atmosphere that obtained on the occasion of the *urs* at the shrine of Khuld Manzil.\(^{55}\)

Kasal Singh, a noble of Muhammad Shah, had founded a whore-house in Delhi known after his name as Kasalpura. The fascinating description of the place as given by Dargah Quli Khan shows how far the whole atmosphere had been vitiated by the luxurious life of the kings and the nobles.\(^{56}\)

Moreover, as a result of prevailing atmosphere of sensual pleasure, the people had developed a taste and liking for obscenily and obscene literature.

Thus, the permeation of such immoral practices and vices had eaten into the vitals of the physical and moral strength of the Muslim community in general and ruling classes in particular. The nobles who

\(^{54}\) Mir Hasan Dehlavi gives a fascinating account of pilgrims on their way to attend the fair and *urs* held at the shrine of Shah Madarat Makanpur. *Masnaviyat-i Mir Hasan*, pp. 137-8.

\(^{55}\) *Muraqqa-i Delhi*, pp. 17-8.

\(^{56}\) *Muraqqa-i Delhi*, p. 76.
were the custodians and strength of the Mughal state, were engrossed in sensual pleasure and wasted their physical energies and financial resources in such activities, instead of exerting ceaselessly for the restoration of the past glory of the declining Mughal Empire and countering effectively the rising regional political forces.