

Contribution of Mughal Emperors in Education

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Abstract

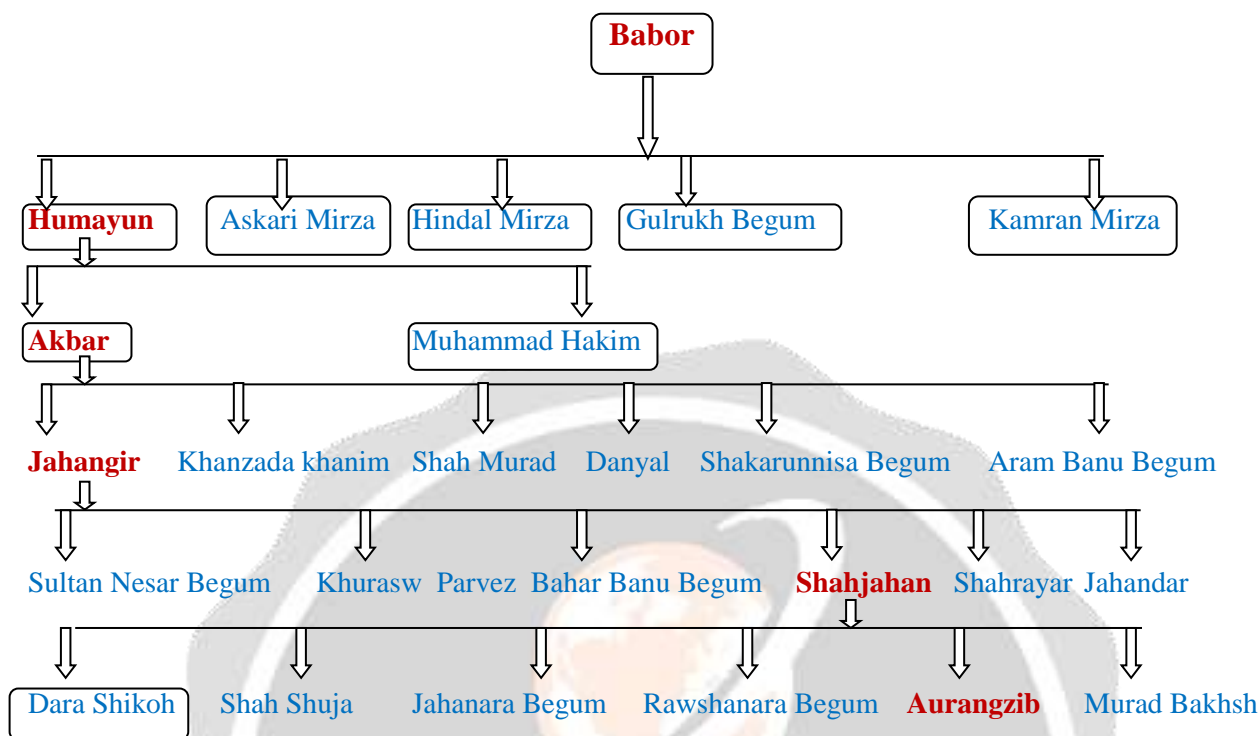
The prime objective of this study is to acquire an understanding of education in the Mughal period. During the Mughal period, the Muslim system of education was predominant. In this period, transformations were brought about in the system of education. During this period, the individuals began to recognize the significance of education and even began to enroll in higher educational institutions. Primary education was imparted in makhtabs, and higher education was imparted in madrasahs. There was initiation of modern and innovative methods and strategies in the teaching and learning processes. Exams and tests were conducted regularly. They were regarded as assessment methods, with the main purpose of evaluating the performance and the learning abilities of the students. The main areas that are taken into account are, objectives of education in Mughal period of India, organization of education, characteristics of education, Islamic system of education, the system of education under the Mughals, vocational education and educational institutions.

Keywords: Education, Educational Institutions, Mughals Period, Professionals, Vocational Education

Introduction:

Mughals period is an important period in the history of India because of the developments in the field of art and languages, culture and religion. Also the period has witnessed the impact of other religions on the Indian culture. Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babor founded the Mughal Empire by defeating Abraham Lodhi at Panipat in 1526. Babor recorded all his experiences in Tuzuk-i-Babori. The word Mughal has its origin in Babor's Mongol ancestry. In 1530 Babor's son Humayun came into power. A battle at Kanauj in 1540 brought Sher Shah into power but again Humayun recaptured Delhi and Agra. He re-established Mughal rule in India. He was succeeded by his son Akbar. He was the great emperor and brought almost entire India under his rule. Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb are the other Mughal kings. The transformations that were brought about in the system of education since the ancient times are a reflection that there have been changes and transformations in the social contexts. The system of education in Mughal India primarily focused upon Islamic. The new social realities, particularly the interplay between the democratization of education, emergence of knowledge society and globalization had a large influence upon the educational processes of all societies. In making an attempt to meet with all the challenges and problems, the country also took into consideration, the international dimension of education. National needs and expectations of the international community may seem to have conflicting interests, but the receptivity of change within the country has led to their complementarities. An analysis of the changing conditions reveals that most of these changes are likely to permeate through the educational policies of the next few decades (Introduction, n.d.).

The Mughal Family Line



Objectives of Education in Mughals Period

The objectives of education in Mughals Period of India have been stated as follows: (An Overview of Medieval and Modern Education, n.d.).

1. During the Muslim period, the education was meant to extend the knowledge and propagate Islam.
2. The impartment of education took place with the propagation of Islamic principles, laws and social conventions.
3. Education was based on religion and its main purpose was to make the individuals religious-minded.
4. The Muslim education aimed at the achievement of material wealth and prosperity.

The Mughal period made immense contribution in the system of education. During this period, the Mughal emperors acquired enormous understanding for learning and recognized the significance of education to a major extent.

I. Jahiruddin Muhammad Babar—His Contribution to Islamic Education (1526-1530):

He was an accomplished scholar in Arabic, Persian and Turki. He was a celebrated author of Turkish poems. His “Memoirs” throws light on this issue. Bahar was also famous for his Persian composition (Abul Fazl). He invented a new style of verse called “Mubaivan”. He was a great literary genius. Babar was also a fastidious critic.

He composed a book entitled Mufassal. He had also skill in music. Babar initiated a form of handwriting—“The Babarui handwriting” and wrote a copy of the Koran in that script. Fond of books as he was, Babar took possession of Ghazi Khan’s library. He was also a lover of paintings. Babar made the diffusion of education a duty of the state. Babar had a society of literary men. He was the author of Quaran I – Humayum.

Babar’s Shurhrat-am (Public works Department) was entrusted with the duty of publishing a Gazette and buildings and colleges. The fact that the establishment of educational institutions constituted an important item of Babar’s administrative programme speaks much for his interest in the extension of education in his Indian Empire.

II. Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Humayun (1530-56)

He was an accomplished scholar. He gave great encouragement to learned men, and used to discuss literary subjects with them. Emperor Humayun held learned men in very high esteem. His learned associates included Mir Abdul Latif. He designated the different grades of persons by twelve arrows, the lowest being made of base material and the highest (the 12th Arrow) being made of pure gold.

Humayun was very fond of astronomy and geography, these branches of science made considerable progress during his reign. He wrote a dissertation on the nature of elements and constructed his own terrestrial and celestial globes. He was very fond of poetry and he himself composed verses. Ferishta tells us that he fitted up seven halls for the reception of his officers, and dedicated them to seven planets. The learned men were received in the Saturn and Jupiter halls. Humayun was fond of magnificence.

He classified it into three major categories:

- (1) The holy men, the law officers and the scientists formed one category known as Ahli-Saadt,
- (2) The relations of the monarch, the nobles, the ministers and military men formed the second category known as Ahli-Daulat, and
- (3) The third category was formed of musicians and artists, known as Ahli- Murad.

Humayun was a great bibliophile and a studious scholar. He was very fond of books. He had collected a vast number of books in the Imperial library. So intense was his love for the best books of the day that even during military expeditions, he carried a selective library with him. Under his orders the "pleasure house" of Sher Shah, called Sher Mondal, was turned into a library. He founded a madrasah at Delhi.

III. Sher Shah:

Sher Shah, who dethroned Humayun and ruled for four years, did much for the promotion of education in his dominions inspite of the short duration of his reign. His educational contributions were not contrary to the spirit of the Mughal rulers. He rather paved the way for Akbar. Personally, he was well-educated at Jaunpur, the then famous centre of Islamic culture and education. He was a cultured king and a serious scholar.

He was fond of philosophy, history and biography. He could reproduce Sadi, Sikandar, Namah Gulistan and Bastan from memory. He was also fond of learned men, and built the most gigantic madrasah called the Sher Shahi Madrasah at Naruaul.

IV. Contributions of Akbar, the Great Mughal (1556-1605):

The reign of Akbar, son and successor of Humayun, was characterised by peace and prosperity. This afforded ample opportunity for literary activities in India. His court was crowded with men of letters like Abul Fazl and his brother Abul Faizi, Abdul Qadir Badaoni, Abdur Rahim and others. As a result, we have masterpieces of literary works like the Ain-i-Akbari.

Agra:

Agra, in the reign of Akbar, was a famous seat of learning and a celebrated centre of education. It had several schools and colleges, where students flocked from far and wide for listening to the lectures of learned and distinguished teachers. A big madrasah existed there.

Lahore:

Lahore too was, at this time, an eminent abode of literary geniuses. It was here that celebrated Tarikh-i-Alfi was written and the Mahabharata and the Rajtarangini were translated into Persian.

Fathepur Sikri:

Fathepur Sikri was also famous for cultural activities. It had several schools and colleges. The well-known Ibadat Kbhana was situated here. It was the meeting place of the intellectuals of various nationalities and the centre of a set of brilliant scholars of the reign. In it, the representatives of different schools of thought used to discuss minute points of their religions.

From here unity of all religions was preached and propagated. Din-i-Illahi was promulgated here. Akbar's eclectic attitude enabled Christians, Jews, Ulemas and Pandits to expound their philosophies and theological doctrines.

Controversy about Akbar's Literacy:

Noer says that Akbar was illiterate. Tuzuk – i – Jahangiri had mentions him as “illiterate and uneducated.” But Abul Fazal says that Akbar some education in his early years. He received lessons in military sciences from Munim Khan. Akbar was also coached by Per Muhammad and Hazi Muhammad. Still others hold that Akbar was well read in history and could recite Hafiz. He also communicated intimately with philosophers, Sufis and historians.

Communal and racial toleration was a basic principle of Akbar's state craft. His policy of religious neutrality reflected in the literary and cultural intercourse of the time. Akbar's love of learning was profound. He had great respect for the learned. Under his patronage, a good number of books on history, philosophy, religion and other sciences were written, compiled and translated. He had many books in Sanskrit or other languages translated into Persian or Hindi.

Akbar Nama and Ain-i-Akbari were written by Abul Fazal. Tarikh-i-Alfi was compiled by a group of learned scholars. The Tarikh-i-Badaoni was written by Abdul Quadir Badaoni. Nizam-Ud-Din Ahmed wrote Tabaquat- i- Akbari in Persian. Several copious works were translated into Persian from other languages. Waqiyat-i-Babari was translated into Persian by Khan Abdur Rahim. The Jama-i-Rashidi was translated into Persian from Arabic by Abdul Quadir Badaoni.

The Badshah-Namah was also put into Persian prose and the Hayat-ul-Haiwan was also translated into Persian. Ulug Khan's astronomical tables as also the works of Hindu astronomers were translated. A large number of Sanskrit and Hindi books were translated into Persian under the Imperial patronage. The Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Atharva Veda, the Bhagavata Gita and the Rajtarangini and many others were put into Persian.

At instance of the Emperor, the Imperial Library was enriched with innumerable collections. Important works, in prose and verse, dealing with history, philosophy, sciences, religion, astronomy, music, medicine, theology and law were collected and placed in the Imperial Library. The Librarian was Faizi who left a library of 4,600 volumes. The Emperor also acquired the library of Itimad Khan Gujrati.

Arts, crafts and music were greatly patronized by Akbar. He collected and maintained a gallery of paintings. Painting was elaborately used. Akbar also encouraged Penmanship. Under royal patronage, Calligraphy became a part of the fine arts. Akbar, a lover of fine arts, was a great patron of Music. He maintained numerous court musicians, both men and women. Tansen was the greatest of them.

Akbar took great interest in the education of the royal princes. Though female education was not extensive during the Middle Ages, Akbar was not antagonistic to it. He encouraged education of the harem girls for which he built a zenana school in the place.

Akbar's reign was marked by the growth of an extensive and sound system of education through schools and colleges. He set up many new colleges. At his instance, a big college and several madrasahs were founded at Fathepur Sikri. There was another big college at Agra. Akbar had early realised the importance of education for the making and development of a nation.

Accordingly, under his instruction, numerous makhtabs and madrasahs, for both resident and day-scholars, were founded and richly endowed. Education was encouraged in every possible way. Stipends and scholarships were granted to the deserving alumni and arrangements were also made for the free education of the poor.

Education was also greatly encouraged by private individuals—the nobles and the wealthy middle class. The madrasah of Akbar's foster mother Moham Auaga was famous. Also remarkable was the college of Khawaja Muin.

The Great Emperor was also an experimenter, innovator and reformer. With a view to improve the existing system of education he introduced a large number of reforms and innovations. His famous experiment on language learning is on record and is widely known. He championed the traditional Indian method of writing followed by reading in the place of reading followed by writing. It was surely an improved method of teaching. It was sure and economic from the point of view of time.

The curriculum was so modified as to enable the students to acquire education according to their particular aims and ambitions. Nothing was forcibly thrust upon them. The students thus enjoyed academic freedom. The practical side of education was also not neglected. The various arts and sciences were taught in the following order—ethics, arithmetic, accounts, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, economics, the art of administration, physics, logic, natural philosophy, abstract mathematics, divinity and history.

Akbar's other reforms included emphasis upon rational understanding instead of rote learning, pupils must understand by self- learning, revision of former lessons, practical knowledge of science subjects and encouragement of mechanical arts.

Akbar held eclectic view of life and culture. His ideals and objectives of education were not strictly religious but purely political. He cherished Sufism —fusion of both the culture of the Hindus and the Muslims. He

made cultural synthesis of the two. Akbar championed education of Hindus and Muslims alike. Akbar had a broad national outlook. He sought to have education imparted to all classes of his subjects irrespective of their caste and creed. The Hindus were educated on the same line as the Muslims.

Thus education was nationalised by the Great Mughal. Akbar offered state patronage to the development of the Hindu culture. Thus Akbar, the Great Mughal, was a patron of and contributor to education. The glory of Islamic education in India reached its zenith in the days of Akbar the Great.

V. Jahangir (1605-27):

Jahangir was a scholar and a poet. He was interested in history and wrote his autobiography. He was an unfailing friend of the learned. Nimatullah, Haibat Khan, Nequib Khan, Mirza Ghiyas Beg etc. adorned Jahangir's Court. On Fridays, the Emperor conferred with learned men. He knew Persian and Turkish which enabled him to read Babor's Memoir in original and to copy 4 of its missing chapters.

Jahangir was greatly interested in promoting the cause of education. He repaired and reconstructed the moribund and dilapidated maktabas and madrasahs. Jahangir was a great lover of books (particularly old books and manuscripts) and paintings. The Imperial Library was augmented with numerous valuable additions.

He took with him a good library from Gujrat. He paid 3,000 gold coins for the purchase of rare Persian manuscripts. He appointed Muktab Khan as the librarian of the Imperial Library and keeper of the picture gallery. The Mughal painting reached its zenith during Jahangir. Farrukh Beg and Abul Hassan were famous painters of his time. Jahangir Namah was ornamented with paintings.

VI. Shahjahan (1627-59):

He was a cultured king and a refined scholar. He is better known for his magnificence. Shah Jahan founded the Imperial College at Delhi near Jam-i-Masjid. He also repaired and reconstructed the college (Madrasah) named Dar-ul-Baqa {abode of eternity} and appointed Kazi Sadaruddin Khan as its director. Shah Jahan was also a lover of books on travels, biographies and histories. He was a great patron of music.

Painting received his encouragement. Shah Jahan also ordered the writing of Padshah Namah and encouraged learned men by rewards. Amin Qazwini and Abdul Hakim Slalkoti were among the most shining stars of his court. Architecture was a special contribution of Shah Jahan.

Shah Jahan's eldest son Dara Shukoh mastered Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. He translated Sanskrit works into Persian. The Vedas and Upanishads inspired him. He collected Brahmins to translate them. Dara himself was a voluminous writer and author of many books. He translated the Upanishads, Bhaavat Gita, the Ramayana etc. Dara was a follower of Sufism. He wrote three works of Sufism.

VII. Aurangzeb (Alamgir) 1659-1707:

Akbar's eclecticism and toleration could not attain permanency. Communal reaction had begun in the reign of Shah Jahan. Aurangzeb completely turned the table. Religious bigotry reflected in the administration and educational policy. Aurangzeb cared very little for the promotion of Hindu learning. He patronised Islamic education only.

Under his orders many Hindu educational institutions were demolished. He appointed teachers in Muslim educational institutions throughout his empire. Students received financial help from the treasury in the forms of stipends and scholarships. Aurangzeb assisted students in proportion to their proficiency in their education, with daily stipends.

Aurangzeb founded a number of schools and colleges in his kingdom and took special interest in the education of his subjects in the outlying provinces. He was particularly interested in the education of the Bohras of Gujrat for which he appointed teachers who were to hold monthly examinations.

He repaired and reconstructed the old maktabas and madrasahs of Gujrat. He also extended necessary financial support to these institutions. He confiscated the Dutch buildings in Lucknow and used them as educational institutions. Ahmedabad and Sialkot became great seats of Muslim learning during Aurangzeb's regime.

Aurangzeb also took steps for the education of the princesses in the harem. They were first taught to read and write in their mother tongue. Subsequently, tutors gave lesson in military sciences, principles of equity, jurisprudence and religion.

Aurangzeb himself was well-educated. Personally he was well-versed in Arabic, Persian and his own mother-tongue (Turkish). He was equally conversant with several arts and sciences. He was thoroughly conversant

with Muslim theology and the mysteries of Arabic grammar. During fixed hours of the day he read and copied the Koran and used to sell the copies. He augmented the collection of the Imperial Library by adding innumerable important theological works and works on Islamic jurisprudence. He was particularly interested in law and under his personal supervision the famous

Muslim Law, *Fatwa-I-Alamgiri*, was compiled and placed in the Imperial Library.

Though Aurangzeb was deeply religious minded, yet he was not satisfied with the traditional Islamic curricular ideas on theological and grammatical skill. He enunciated his own theory of royal education which emphasized the importance of general and practical knowledge.

He wanted philosophy to adopt the mind, to reason and to elevate the soul. He demanded first principles. He wanted lessons in reciprocal duties of king and subjects, arts of war, history, geography and languages. It proved extremely successful and led to an extensive diffusion of knowledge and the rise of a number of eminent poets and scholars like Danishmand Khan, Fazal Khan, Itimad Khan and others. Abdul Aziz, Abdul Karim and Abdullah were renowned teachers of the time.

VIII. Conclusion:

Never in the whole history of India did art and literature, science and commerce flourish as a whole quite as much as during the two hundred years of the Great Mughals rulers. Education made mighty strides during the Mughal Period. It was because these emperors were great educationists and patrons of learning.

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