

HISTORY AND CULTURE OF PAKISTAN

PART: A

Question/Answers

1. How did Aurangzeb gain power?

Ans. Aurangzeb gained power through his abilities as a great warrior. When Shah Jahan fell ill and was thought to be dying, all four of his sons wanted to succeed to the position of emperor. However, it was only the strongest contender that could come to the Mughal throne. Aurangzeb proved to be that successful contender by first by-passing his brother Murad and Shuja, who were the weaker ones. However, he had to fight a battle with Dara at Samugarh in order to get the throne. Dara and his son were eventually executed, and Shah Jahan, who regained his health later on, quietly surrendered to Aurangzeb's rule.

2. What kind of man was Aurangzeb?

Ans. Aurangzeb Alamgir was a controversial figure in history. On one hand, he was deeply committed, self-disciplined and a devout, orthodox Muslim. He wore plain clothes and spent a considerable amount of time writing down copies of the Quran. However, on the other hand, he was also extremely ruthless in war and believed that "anything is permissible in open war." (Aurangzeb) He made sure that his enemies feared him by his extreme ruthlessness, which helped him maintain law and order in his country. Power was his utmost ambition, and no one could doubt his courage in battle.

3. What was jizya tax?

Ans. Jizya is a tax in Islam that is only levied on non-Muslims living under Muslim rule. During the Mughal empire, Akbar had abolished this tax on the Hindus, but Aurangzeb introduced it again after one hundred years, which angered them a lot. People protested and revolted against it, and some even spread the rumours that Aurangzeb was forcibly trying to convert people to Islam. However, being the determined emperor that he was, he remained steadfast on his decision.

4. Did Aurangzeb weaken the Mughal empire?

Ans. Yes, Aurangzeb was responsible for weakening the Mughal empire in several ways. Firstly, he fought long, costly wars in his ambition to expand the

Mughal Empire, which utilized great manpower and resources. Secondly, he levied heavy taxes due to which the people suffered, creating emotions of resentment amongst them. Thirdly, he was frequently away from his capital, which weakened his rule on the government, resulting in corruption and instability. Last but not the least, Aurangzeb was not able to properly govern the huge empire that he had acquired; maintaining contact with all parts of it was a challenging task. Therefore, near his death, his authority was threatened by Sikhs in the Punjab and Marathas in central India. All these factors collectively contributed to the weakening of the Mughal Empire.