



6. Discuss, with examples, the distinctive features of Mughal chronicles.

Ans:

- (i) Chronicles commissioned by the Mughal emperors are an important source for studying the empire and its court. They were written in order to project a vision of an enlightened kingdom to all those who came under its umbrella. The authors of Mughal chronicles focused on events-related to life of the ruler, their family, the court and nobles, wars and administrative system.
- (ii) These chronicles were written in Persian. This language flourished as a language of the court and of literary writings, alongside north Indian languages, especially Hindavi and its regional variants. As the Mughals were Chaghtai Turks by origin, Turkish was their mother tongue.
- (iii) Chronicles narrating the events of a Mughal emperor's reign contained, alongside the written text, images that described an event in visual form.
- (iv) When scenes or themes in a book were to be given visual expression, the scribe left blank spaces on nearby pages; paintings, executed separately by artists, were inserted to accompany what was described in words.

7. To what extent do you think the visual material presented in this chapter corresponds with Abu'l Fazl's description of the taswir (Source 1)?

Ans:

- (i) Drawing the likeness of anything is called taswir. His Majesty from his earliest youth, has shown a great predilection for this art, and gives it every encouragement, as he looks upon it as a means both of study and amusement.
- (ii) A very large number of painters set to work.
- (iii) Each week, several supervisors and clerks of the imperial workshop submit before the emperor the work done by each artist, and his Majesty gives a reward.
- (iv) Paintings served not only to enhance the beauty of a book, but were believed to possess special powers of communicating ideas about the kingdom and the power of kings in ways that the written medium could not.
- (v) The historian Abu'l Fazl described painting as a 'magical art' in his view it had the power to make inanimate objects look as if they possessed life.

8. What were the distinctive features of the Mughal nobility? How was their relationship with the emperor shaped?

Ans: Recruitment, rank of the nobility and relationship with the emperor:

- (i) Mughal chronicles, especially the Akbar Nama, have bequeathed a vision of empire in which agency rests almost solely with the emperor, while the rest of the kingdom has been portrayed as following his orders, if we look more closely at the available information the histories provide us about the apparatus of the Mughal state, we may be able to understand the ways in which the imperial organisation was dependent on several different institutions.
- (ii) The most important pillar of the Mughal state was the nobility.

The nobility was recruited from diverse ethnic and religious group which ensured that no faction was large enough to challenge the authority of the state.

(iii) The officer corps of the Mughals was described as a bouquet of flowers (guldasta) held together by loyalty to the emperor. In Akbar's imperial service, Turani and Iranian nobles were present from the earliest phase of carving out a political dominion. Many had accompanied Humayun; others migrated later to the Mughal court.

(iv) The holders of government offices was given the ranks (mansabs) comprising two numerical designations: zat which was an indicator of position in the imperial hierarchy and the salary of the official (mansabdar), and sawar which indicated the number of horsemen he was required to maintain in service.

(v) Akbar, who designed the mansab system, also established spiritual relationships with a select band of his nobility by treating them as his disciples (murid).

(vi) For members of the nobility, imperial service was a way of acquiring power, wealth and the highest possible reputation. A person wishing to join the service petitioned through a noble, who presented a tadjwiz to the emperor.

(vii) If the applicant was found suitable, a mansab was granted to him. The mir bakhshi (paymaster general) stood in open court on the right of the emperor and presented all candidates for appointment or promotion, while his office prepared orders bearing his seal and signature as well as those of the emperor. There were two other important ministers at the centre: the diwan-i ai (finance minister) and sadr-us sudur (minister of grants or madad-i maash, and in charge of appointing local judges or qazis).

(viii) The three ministers occasionally came together as an advisory body, but were independent of each other.

(xi) Akbar with these and other advisers shaped the administrative, fiscal and monetary institutions of the empire. Nobles stationed at the court (tainat-i rakab) were a reserve force to be deputed to a province or military campaign. Nobles were duty-bound to appear twice a day to express submission their to the emperor.

(x) They also had to share the responsibility for guarding the emperor and his household round the clock.

9. Identify the elements that went into the making of the Mughal ideal of kingship.

Ans:

(i) According to Akbars court poet, Abu'l Fazl Mughal kingship as the highest station in the hierarchy of objects receiving light emanating from God (farr-i- izadi). According to this idea, there was a Hierarchy in which the Divine Light was transmitted to the king (Mughal Emperor) who then became the source of spiritual guidance for his subjects.

(ii) Mughal chronicles present the empire as comprising many different ethnic and religious communities - Hindus, Jainas, Zoroastrians and Muslims. As the source of all peace and stability, the emperor stood above all religious and ethnic groups, mediated among them, and ensured that justice and peace prevailed.

(iii) Abu'l Fazl describes the ideal of sulh-i kui (absolute peace) as the cornerstone of enlightened rule. In sulh-i kul all religions and schools of thought had freedom of expression but on condition that they did not undermine the authority of the state or fight among themselves The ideal of sulh-i kul was implemented through state policies - the nobility under the Mughals was a composite one comprising Iranis, Turanis, Afghans, Rajputs, Qeccanis - all of whom were given positions and awards purely on the basis of their service and loyalty to the king.

(iv) Akbar abolished the tax on pilgrimage in 1563 and jizya in 1564 as the two were based on religious discrimination. Instructions were sent to officers of the empire to follow the concept of sulh-i kul.

(v) All Mughal emperors gave grants to support the buildings and maintenance of places of worship. However, it was during the reign of Aurangzeb, the jizya was re-imposed on non-Muslim subjects.

(vi) Abu'l Fazl defined sovereignty as a social contract. According to him the emperor protects the four essences of subjects, namely, life (jan), property (mal), honour (narnus) and faith (din), and in return demands obedience and a share of resources from the people. Only sovereigns were thought to be able to honour the contract with power and Divine guidance.

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