

Image of Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan in the novel of Khushwant Singh's Delhi

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Abstract

Khushwant Singh portrays Aurangzeb as a historical personage. There are twenty one chapters in Khushwant Singh's *Delhi*. Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan is entitled as the tenth chapter of *Delhi*. Aurangzeb was born in Dohad, a small town in Gujarat on 3rd Nov 1618 under the dual sign of Libra and Scorpio. This article focuses the image of Aurangzeb in the writings of Khushwant Singh. Though he was born as fourth son of his parents, he had the power to rule the Mughal empire. His brothers Dara Shikoh, Sujah and Murad did not care about the empire. Khushwant Singh explained ninety years of his life and forty eight years of his reign. This attempt of writing gives a vivid picturization of Aurangzeb's life. It is a boon to learn the life history of Aurangzeb.

Key words: *Historical personage, Deccan, hostages, peacock throne, harem, calamities.*

Aurangzeb was born on November 3, 1618. He was the sixth Mughal Emperor seated on a Peacock Throne in the darbar with a Hawk. Muhi-ud-Din Muhammad was his original name and he was the one of the sons of Shah Jahan. He had many wives Nawab Bai, Udaipuri Mahal, Dilras Banu Begum and ten children. Aurangzeb was considered as one of the most controversial Indian ruler. Khushwant Singh made his attempt to write about six hundred years history of Delhi in his novel Delhi. The author entitled the chapter as Aurangzeb Alamgir: Emperor of Hindustan.

According to their custom poems were composed for the birth of Mughal family. A poet composed a song titled “Aftab-e- Alamtab” that is sun- whose- radiance- would take the world in its embrace. Another poet composed Gauhar-e- Taj-Muluk- Aurangzeb that is Aurangzeb- a- pearl- in the emperor’s crown. Astrologers predicted his character and qualities as dutiful and merciful. When he was born Prince Khurram was the viceroy of the Deccan and Jahangir was the emperor of Hindustan. Shah Jahan and Mumtaz have fourteen children. Seven were taken by Allah to paradise. Remaining seven were Jaganara Begum, Dara Shikoh, Shuja, Rosanara Begum, Aurangzeb, Murad and Gauhar Ara. Their mother died on 7th June 1631. Taj Mahal was built for his royal mother, Mumtaz in Agra.

Aurangzeb has the memory of his childhood. His grandfather Jahangir was displeased with his father Shah Jahan. Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb were taken as hostages and they lived with his grandfather at Lahore. Mir Mohammad Hashim Gilani and Aitmad Khan taught the sacred words of Allah. Then Shah Jahan became the emperor of Hindustan on October 1627. During the period he suggested some ideas about his sons. Dara, the elder has made himself an enemy of

good man. Murad has spent himself on drinking. Shuja has no good traits. Aurangzeb proves that he can bear the burden of ruling India, but he is physically weak.

They have assembled to watch a fight between two elephants, Sudhakar and SuratSundar. Sudhakar got angry and marched towards the crowd. SuratSundar came back and chased Sudhakar.

At the age of eighteen Aurangzeb married DilrasBano Begum, daughter of Shah NawazSafawi. Murad married Dilras' sister. They became brother-in-law. They stayed in the harem and enjoyed well. His teacher advised him that a ruler should always be on the move; otherwise it may cause calamities like stagnated water. At the age of thirty five, he met HiraBai, his aunt's slave. She is the wife of Saif Khan. He is ready to do anything for her. First he decided to kill Saif Khan later he exchanged Chatter Bai for HiraBai. HiraBai was brought in the palanquin to his harem. They had ten children. Dara poisoned his father's mind by saying about Aurangzeb's relationship with HiraBai. The almighty took the love of him to paradise. With tank full of tears he buried her in Aurangabad.

Shah Jahan started hating Aurangzeb. The emperor presented gold and jewellery to Dara and his son. But nothing is given to Aurangzeb and his sons. His majesty has decided that Dara will be the future king of Daccan. In order to serve humanity Aurangzeb wants to become the king. Aurangzeb wrote: "If his Majesty wishes that of all his servants I alone should pass my life in dishonor and at last perish in an unbecoming manner, I have no recourse but to obey... Ten years ago I realized this fact; I knew my life was a target"(149). Soothsayers say that Aurangzeb will be fit for the throne. When Aurangzeb is in Burhanpur, he received the news that his father

had been taken ill on 6th Sep 1657, he did prayer for his speedy recovery. Shuja and Murad did not heed Aurangzeb's words. Shuja proclaimed himself as the emperor, Murad proclaimed himself as the monarch of Hindustan. Aurangzeb heard that Dara was the master of the Red Fort. "Kingship knows no kinship" (152). Aurangzeb thought of his successors. His great ancestor Zahiruddin Babar had laid the foundation stone of the empire in Hindustan in 1526. His two sons Humayun and Kauran fight between them. Allah had granted the throne to Humayun, Akbar disposed of Kamran's son. Jahangir became emperor but his son Khusrau in the confinement. The same thing followed for Dara. Shah Jahan defeated his brothers Dawar Baksh and Shahryar. "Likewise we are four, but only one can sit on the peacock throne. A kingdom is like a scabbard which can hold only one sword at a time" (153). Sarmad, a mad man told that Dara would be the king of India. But Aurangzeb wants to save the kingdom from falling into the hands of an enemy. Dara Shikoh's son Sulaiman Shikoh and Rajput Jai Singh had defeated Shuja near Benares. Sulaiman sent another Rajput, Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur against Aurangzeb and Murad. Aurangzeb and Murad defeated Dara and Jaswant Singh. Murad moved to grape bed and remained drunkard for many days.

Aurangzeb went to Agra. His majesty also sent the gift of sword, Alamgir had invited Aurangzeb to visit him in the fort. Aurangzeb's spy informed about the secret plan of Shah Jahan to kill Aurangzeb. After knowing this Aurangzeb cut the water channel to the fort. His Majesty pleaded for our sympathy: 'Why should I complain of the unkindness of fortune, seeing that not a leaf is shed by a tree without the will of Allah? Only yesterday I was master of 9,00,000 troops, and today I am in need of a pitcher of water! Praise be to the Hindus who offer water to their dead, while my devout Muslim son refuses water to the living! (156)

On 8th June 1658 Aurangzeb went to Redfort. Murad became drunkard and he spent his time for dancing, wine bibbing and revelry. So Aurangzeb thought that Murad won't fit for the empire Aurangzeb called Murad and arrested him with handcuff. His majesty became too old, too ill to bear the burden of the empire. Aurangzeb captured Dara. Dara begged Aurangzeb, "Grant me a house to live in, and maid from my former retinue to attend to my needs, and I will devote my life in retreat to praying for your good" (Singh 156). But Aurangzeb murdered Dara on 30th August 1659 for his fault. Sulaiman was murdered on 5th Jan 1661. Then Sarmad, who had falsely prophesied the throne to Dara was murdered by Aurangzeb.

Moti- Masjid was built near Diwan-i- Khan. All spent their time in the Mosque by doing prayer. On 18 Jan 1666, Shah Jahan became ill and he wants to see the Tajmahal through Jasmine Tower. On 22 Jan 1666, he went to paradise. After some days Aurangzeb became the emperor of Hindustan. He sat on the peacock throne. He extended his reign, Eastward to Chatgaon, Northward to Tibet, Westward to Kabul and Southward to Karnatak. He crushed the Jats, Rajputs, Satnamis and Nank Prasthas. He imposed jazia tax on non-believers. He was against drinking and dancing. People called him as Zinda Peer (a Living Saint). He did war against infidels.

Other kings would have treated the state treasury as their personal property and wasted it in extravagant living, women, wine, jewels and monuments. We looked upon ourselves as God's chosen custodian to use it for the good of the people. On ourselves we spent no more than the poorest of our subjects. We sewed prayer caps and made copies of the holy *Quran*. Whatever we got for them in the market we spent on our food and personal raiment. (Singh 159-160)

Rosanara Begum loves nature and she wants her tomb on an open space. Her wish was carried out after her death. Jahanara Begum also presented by 1,00,000 gold pieces, 1,700,000 rupees and called her as Padshah Begum. The tomb of hers had the lines written by herself. In 1706, Ara Begum was taken by Allah. After that Aurangzeb's health started deteriorate. His aged wife Udaipuri Begum and his beloved daughter Zeenat-un- Nissa took care of him. Aurangzeb felt for Shuja, Azam and KamBaksh. But he felt happy for his lovable daughter Zebu- un- Nissa. She wrote many poetry under the pseudonym Makfhi. She encouraged his brother to take care of the empire. Muzzam, the eldest son was also not fit for the empire. In 1705, when Aurangzeb was in Devpur, on the banks of the river Krishna, he suffered from high fever and died. He gave all his property to the poor. He does not want any mausoleums over his body. He wrote " And carry this creature of dust quickly to the first burial place and consign him to the earth without any useless coffin" (163). Khushwant Singh portrays the real life history of Aurangzeb in a lovable way. Khushwant Singh was a historian who wrote about the life of various historical personages like Timurid, Nadir Shah, Alice Aldwell and Bhagadur Shah Zafar. His writing gives a real picture of their life. It motivates the budding writers to write about the historical events.

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