
Aurangzeb Alamgir (b. 1618-d. 1707): Reclaiming his Legacy through Contemporary and Current Historical Accounts

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Aurangzeb Alamgir's political rise, statecraft and warfare are the most controversial among the Great Mughals. Those, who are in his favour, argue that he expanded the Mughal Empire to its largest territorial extent. He was known for his personal austerity and discipline and he was an effective military commander and administrator and was one of the longest serving Mughal monarchs who ruled India about 49 years. The critics have equally forceful points arguing against him. They criticize his policies of imposition of Jizya on non-Muslims, demolishing Hindu temples in some cases, less tolerance in religious policies as against the glorious tradition of Akbar, long and costly wars in the Deccan which strained the Empire's finances and military resources. The critics argue that his policies, to a larger extent, contributed to the weakening of Mughal authority which became difficult to be managed smoothly after his death. In short, Auragzeb's legacy is the most debated in aspects of religion, state policy, and incessant wars. This paper assesses merits and demerits of contemporary and current historical accounts which discuss Aurangzeb as a person, his policies, statecraft and historical legacy.

Key Words: Monarchy, Turko-Persian traditions of statecraft, culture of power, the Mughal dynasty, Jizya, governance, religious co-existence

Historical Perspective

Aurangzeb Alamgir, the last of the great Mughal emperors (b. 1658 A.D-d.1707 AD), donned the throne in 1658 AD. As a ruler, Alamgir had to cope with the internal as well as external threats coming mainly from the recalcitrant factions whose main contention was with the emperor over territorial and fiscal matters. Simply, the throne was not meant for him to be a bed of roses but it proved to be a bed of thorns. His legacy, as a ruler, is a hotly debated topic among intellectual circles and academics. Among these intellectual circles, a wafer-thin minority appreciates him whereas the majority of arguments go against him.

A historian is a product of society. Multiple internal and external factors influence him throughout his career albeit in various ways. He has his or her own likes and dislikes, which are mirrored in his or her writings. Internally, subject to the maturity of his cognitive faculties, his mind is bent on preferring the cause of the one over the other. To put it simply, he pillories one and extols the other. Externally, he is influenced by a host of social, political, religious and economic factors. His own person is never independent of any of these factors. To say it in literary parlance, he is not an island entire of himself, but part of the main. Being a social product, he imbibes the values, norms, likes, dislikes, customs and ideologies prevalent in the place where he lives. All such factors have an impact of immense proportion on his mind, whenever he or she attempts to pen down accounts of historical events. The accounts, thus penned down by such a bent of mind, often smack of one-dimensional narratives that have a greater propensity to obfuscate the objective reality. Another disservice deliberately done is the nationalist approach to history. Such a history is not free from spewing venom against the opposite ideologies, political ideals, and icons of the other nations. For instance, South Asian historiographic traditions are a case in point. Both Hindus and the Muslims go the whole hog while defending their respective historical figures, on religious basis only. The one who is antagonist in India, the same is protagonist in Pakistan and vice versa. As a result, the objectivity is lost, which is the *elan vital* of true historical discourse. The post-modernist approach to history vehemently endorses the idea of partial objectivity in historical discourses. To them, the path of a historian lies somewhere¹ between objectivity and subjectivity.

Another facet of one-dimensional approach is the elitist approach to history, which is the most cherished ambition among the ghost writers of the history. Histories, written with such approach serve as a repertoire in which the achievements are hailed beyond proportion, whereas the lacunae and failures are obscured from the readers, fan the flames of propaganda and

bigotry, and are a conduit of misinformation and disinformation. Owing to the multiple layers of misinformation and disinformation, the readers' window on the world gets obscured, thus rendering it difficult, though not impossible, for him to sift between reality and fiction. Moreover, it serves as a conspicuous irritant in the path of independent thinking and flow of healthy and productive ideas. Philip M. Taylor puts it thus:

“Propaganda forces us to think and do things in ways we might not have done otherwise. It obscures our windows on the world by providing layers of distorting condensation. It becomes the enemy of independent thought and an intrusive and unwanted manipulator of the free flow of the information and ideas”.²

Likewise, nationalist approach to history often results in doing disservice to the subject of history. Extreme nationalistic and jingoistic feelings voice national and ethnic crescendo, in which the glories of one nation are trumpeted, and the positive adventures of the rival nations are thoroughly downplayed. Such an approach does more harm than good. For instance, in the context of Indian history, the British writers projected a glorious image of the English people. On the contrary, the Indian image was depicted in black, accompanied by elements of barbarism, featuring both ancient and modern Indian history.

Among many British writers on Indian history, specific mention will be made of three of them. They were James Mill (1773-1836), V. A. Smith (1843-1920), and Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859). A brown study of their masterpieces will dawn upon us the nationalistic hue, especially the way they preferred their cultural moorings and political institutions over those of indigenous Indians. Here, to substantiate our point of view, we shall produce excerpts from their own writings. It all connotes the superiority of their politico-cultural systems over those of Indian's. James Mill, the author of *History of British India*, castigates Indian culture, civilization and political system by describing them a “rude nation”. The book concerned was first published in 1818, and has been used as a reference book on the subject by literary intelligentsia since then. If the book is delved into, one can easily gauge the bent of mind of the writer. There are numerous passages in which he scolds, castigates and places Hindus as one of the inferior nations of the world.

Not surprisingly, we come across many phrases like rude, blunt, unscrupulous, bad mannered, copiers of foreign ideas, barbarous, having

very low aesthetic sense, deteriorated law and order situation of Hindu society and not *bona fide* inventors or discoverers. A disparaging remark in the book states that “everything we know of the ancient state of Hindus conspires to prove that it was rude.”³ He does not stop here instead leaps forward and out-rightly says, “the European people, even during the feudal age, were greatly superior to the Hindus”.⁴ In the same vein, though not clearly but tacitly, Elphinstone seems not to count in the occasional prowess and discipline displayed by the Indians when encountering their rival invaders. His magnum opus, *History of India*, was published in 1841, and had been the integral part of syllabus meant for those vying for lucrative post in Indian civil services exams. In this book, his bias against the native Indians can be gauged from the fact that he totally glossed over the display of strength exhibited by the Indians in the war against Arabs. Though he says, “the Arabs should not have easily ransacked India as they did Persia”.⁵ Yet, he was wanting in assigning to them the due credit. Had he been unbiased, he would have hinted at the courage and discipline displayed by the Indians. In addition, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a book bearing ample testimony regarding the maritime activities of the Indians, but the writer took a divergent path by making a mention of trade carried out by the Greeks and Arabs.

The next, in the hierarchy of the three, is V. A. Smith, who also adopted the same nationalist approach, with which many European books abound. Like his coterie, Smith also looks down upon the South Asians, as he believes the Europeans had a head start over the South Asian armies. According to him, the Europeans were well-disciplined, battle-hardened and par excellence war strategists, while the south Asians lacked these skills. He goes further, saying that there is every likelihood that India would relapse into chaos, confusion, anarchy, lawlessness and economic instability if the hands of benevolent despotism (British who were ruling then) are withdrawn.⁶ The sum and substance of the above mentioned discourse is that nationalist histories are prone to showcasing the superiority of their nations over others. However, all this does not necessarily mean that a nationalist historian is a propagandist or a charlatan.⁷

Having said this, let us explore Aurangzeb Alamgir’s legacy based on holistic historical accounts, rather than slanted versions that negatively portray him. For this, we shall first dig deep into the veracity of the orientalist accounts, as most of accounts about him came through the agency of writers of Orientalism. As far as the Indians are concerned, their knowledge of history was not an acquisition of times of antiquity, but rather a recent acquisition, as R.C Majumdar himself puts it. The recent work

Aurangzeb: The Man and The Myth by Audre Truschke is also important work to be evaluated.

Few Glimpses of Aurangzeb's Valor

Precocity and intelligence are soon manifested. Not only Aurangzeb was an administrator par excellence, but also he was second to none in terms of physical strength. Being a boy of 14, he encountered a mammoth. For this successful encounter, he received thundering applause not only from his father but onlookers as well. After this triumphant victory, he spoke in the spirit of courageous kings, saying:

“If the fight had ended fatally for me, it would not have been a matter of shame. Death drops its curtain even on emperors; it is no dishonor. The shame lay in what my brothers did”.⁸ These remarks about him have come down to us through the agency of Abdul Hamid Khan. This event has also been recorded by Allama Shibli Nomani, in his book titled *Aurangzeb Alamgir Par aik Nazar* (A Glimpse on Aurangzeb Alamgir). On this occasion, Abu Talib Kaleem, the king of poets, chanted verses of poetry eulogizing the gallantry and bravery of Aurangzeb. They read thus:⁹

به فيلان جنگی چو نوبت رسید
در آن عرصه آمد قیامت پدید
فتادند فيلان جنگی بہم
پے جنگ خرطومہا شد علم
دوید از قضا رادوفیل مہیب
یکے سوئے شہزادہ اورنگ زیب
بہ مردی ز جاہ یک سرمونہ شد
زارہ چین پیل یک سونہ شد
یکے نیزہ برق ساں یافتہ
نظر از رگ غیر تش یافتہ

As the turn of warring elephants came
In that while, it seemed as if the doomsday had fallen
The belligerent elephants were at loggerheads with each other
For war, they lifted up their trunks
All of sudden, the dreadful elephants ran helter-skelter
And one of it made its way to Aurangzeb
On account of his valor and dauntless spirit,
he did not budge even a hair's distance from his place
Even after having seen the elephant likely to encroach upon him
Somehow, he found a spear from somewhere
His inner self honor boiled hot, and pressed hard on him

Another incident, as reported by Lane-Pool, reads thus: During his expedition in Balakh, when the enemy was pouncing upon him like ants and locusts, the spectacle of setting sun heralded the time for obligatory prayer. In the thick of the battle, though in such situations performance of religious obligations stand excused, yet he dismounted from his ride and performed his prayer as composedly as if he was performing it at Agra. Seeing this devotion, dedication and unswerving conviction on the part of Aurangzeb, the enemy king fell back upon his heels, exclaiming! “to fight with such a man is self-destruction”.¹⁰

Avoiding Presentism: Past to be Judged in its own Light

Aurangzeb Alamgir possessed the qualities of both head and heart. As he ruled over a community consisting of heterogeneous groups and ethnicities, he crafted such policies as were conducive to the welfare of the state in general, and to the ruled in particular. However, after going through the pages of history, we find that there were many episodes of conflict and cooperation arising between Aurangzeb and his contenders, mainly on political-cum territorial matters. Amidst all this, one fact ought to be kept in mind that all the policies of Aurangzeb were accentuated by political necessity rather than driven by religious motivations. In every respect, his political intentions are to be construed as real, and not just window dressing. For every age has its exigencies and requirements, which must be coped with in their own way, and in the light of their own circumstances. But unfortunately, the problem with the historians is that they judge the past through the lens of the present, which is not a realistic historical approach. The problem is twofold; firstly, the past is not present and vice versa; secondly, judging past through present entails the possibility of dressing up events for a specific purpose, goal or agenda. Thus, the end result is concoction, fabrication and distortion of historical accounts. This is the essence of what we mean by the word ‘unhistorical’. Professor Butterfield puts it thus: “The study of the past with one eye, so to speak, upon the present is the source of all sins and sophistries in history. It is the essence of what we mean by the word ‘unhistorical’”.¹¹

Casting a Slur upon the Legacy of Aurangzeb by Champions of Present-ism

“To err is human, to forgive divine”. Like all mortals, Aurangzeb was also a human being. As human beings are not infallible, the same holds true for him. He had his share of mistakes to carry, but that does not mean he was

‘all bad’. Admittedly, he was not an epitome of good qualities too. Mistakes are our best teachers, provided a person does not repeat them over and over again. Hazrat Anas bin Malik narrates that the prophet is reported to have said,

"كُلُّ بَنِي آدَمَ خَطَّاءٌ وَخَيْرُ الْخَطَّائِينَ التَّوَّابُونَ"

“The progeny of Adam tends to make mistakes, but the best among those are the ones who repent”.

Political exigencies demand that a ruler should be shrewd and astute so that he may be able to impose the writ of the state, which is possible only if the ruler is vigilant and all alert with regard to the minutest activities of both friends and foes surrounding him. Any slightest lethargy and indifference, on the part of the ruler, can trigger catastrophic outcomes. How aptly Saadi said in poetic verses:¹²

دانی کہ چه گفت زال بار ستم گرد
دشمن نہ توان حقیرویے چارہ شمرد
دیدم بسے کہ آب سرچشمہ خرد
چوں بیشتر آمدشتر و باربرد

O sage! Do you not know what Zal said to the Rustam
Never consider your enemy weak and helpless.
For, I have seen many a time that a paltry spring,
After abounding in inundates camel and its load.

Now, the focus can be paid to the barrage of criticism directed at Aurangzeb, which the books are replete with, so abundant in criticism loaded material that even if an individual researcher attempts to write on it, he or she will find his or her pen running short of ink. In the works of writers of Orientalism and communalism, one finds a fanatic picture of Aurangzeb, who left no stone unturned in pursuing his religiously driven agendas. To them, his major crimes were; demolition of Hindu temples, re-imposition of *Jizya*, butchery of his biological brothers, and imprisonment of his elderly father. Though these charges may have some degree of weight, political figures are not immune from such charges. To this, instances are abundantly found both at home and abroad. Take Shahjehan for an example. Shehryar, Tehmoris and Hoshing (sons of Daniyal) were killed at the behest of Shahjehan. He wrote a missive in which he issued orders of killing his political adversaries. A passage from *Tuzk e Jahangiri* is presented below in its original Persian text, followed by English translation.¹³ The missive issued forth by Shahjehan reads thus:

دریں ہنگام کہ آسمان آشوب طلب و درز میں فتنہ جواست اگر داوریخس پسر
 خردویرادرو و شہریار و پسران شہزادہ دانیال آوارہ صحرائے عدم ساختہ دولت خواہاں را از قوزع
 خاطر و شورش دل فارغ سازند بہ صلاح و صوابدید قرین تر خواہد بود

“In these days, the sky and the earth are full of afflictions, trials and tribulations. (The Persian words آشوب and فتنہ جو refer to these meanings). In these tumultuous times, sending Dawar Baksh, Shehryar, and sons of Daniyal, all of whom are desirous of kingdom, to the desert of nothingness (Addam), thus lessening the burden of heart and easing it of the woes caused by them, seems wiser and closer to judgement.” Hence, the royal decree was carried out.

Even rulers in other parts of the world in Aurangzeb’s times were not innocent of such charges he was alleged to have committed. For instance, Charles II of England, Louis XIV of France, and sultan Suleiman II of the Turks were the contemporaries of Aurangzeb. Were they “any the better”. If they are judged from today’s modern democratic, egalitarian and human rights standards, they will fall short in meeting out any of these modern standards. Indeed, they were rulers of medieval ages, and judging them through modern standards would be being unfair and unjust to them. There might have been political exigencies and necessities, which required effective checkmating, either by rod or nod, or other prevalent methods in vogue then. Therefore, it would be a better approach if they are judged in the light of their own circumstances. Otherwise, as the bent of mind of modern historians betoken itself, no nuanced and compelling account can be attained. To this effect, Audrey Truschke writes:

“Historians seek to comprehend people on their own terms, as product of particular times and places, and explain their actions and impacts. We need not absolve those we study of guilt, and we certainly do not need to like them. But we strive to hold back judgement long enough so that the myth of Aurangzeb can fade into the background and allow room for a more nuanced and compelling story to be told”.¹⁴

Likewise, Indian communal writer, Jadu Nath Sarkar, casts doubts on the credibility and reliability of Indian political history written by foreign observers. He vehemently says:

“The criticism of Indian institutions by foreign observers has a freshness and weight all its own. But of the political history

of India, apart from the few events in which they took part or which they personally witnessed, their report merely reproduced the bazar rumors and the stories current among the populace, and cannot be set against the evidence of contemporary histories and letters in Persian”.¹⁵

To this end, the book *Somnatha*, written by Romila Thapar, adds much to our understanding about the one-dimensional and biased approach adopted by the orientalists in their accounts of Muslim political figures. Although the subject matter of the book is not Aurangzeb, but Mahmood of Ghazni, it lays bare the mindset which writers of communalism and Orientalism had towards the Muslim political figures. In the book, the arguments peddled by her do not align with the prevalent views. She contends that the contemporary sources do not mention the demolition of any temple. She argues, on the basis of Jain inscriptions and other Sanskrit documents, it cannot be said that Mahmood Ghaznavi demolished temple. The story of demolition of temple was spun in later times. In 1842, when British undertook expedition of Afghanistan, they vowed to bring back the gates of temple to India. But when they were brought, it came to be known that Indian craftsmen did not make them. So they were put in a store at Agra.¹⁶ She further contends that the narrative of Hindu-Muslim hostilities, spanning over the centuries, was given a much hype by British, so much so that both communities thought of themselves as mutually antagonistic to and ill at ease with each other. For this, the Muslim rulers, especially Mahmud of Ghazni, were portrayed as looters, muggers, tyrants and inimical to Hindus. By doing so, the British wanted to spotlight their superiority in the eyes of Hindus. To this end, books and texts were advertently wrongly translated and inaccurately interpreted. She alludes to an example, where the Indian historian Utbi wrote, “He (Mahmud) made it obligatory on himself to undertake every year an expedition to Hind”, the translation reads “the sultan vowed to undertake a holy war to Hind every year.”¹⁷

To substantiate this point of view, an account is being reproduced from *Ansab-ul- Ashraf*, written by Al-Baladhuri, who was an erudite and renowned historian of his times. He writes:¹⁸

عَنْ الْعَتَبِيِّ قَالَ قَامَ الْحَارِثُ بْنُ حَوْطِ اللَّيْثِيِّ إِلَى عَلِيٍّ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَتُرَانِي أَظُنُّ طَلْحَةَ وَالزُّبَيْرَ وَعَائِشَةَ اجْتَمَعُوا عَلَى بَاطِلٍ فَقَالَ لَهُ عَلِيٌّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ يَا حَارِثُ إِنَّكَ مَلْبُوسٌ عَلَيَّكَ إِنَّ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ لَا يُعْرِفَانِ بِأَقْدَارِ الرَّجَالِ اعْرِفِ الْحَقَّ تَعْرِفْ أَهْلَهُ وَاعْرِفِ الْبَاطِلَ تَعْرِفْ مَنْ أَتَاهُ

“It was reported by utbi that Al-Harith bin Hut came to Ali and said to him, what do you think? I surmise that Talha, Zubayr and Ayesha have united upon falsehood. To which Ali replied, O Har (Tarkheem-abbreviation of Harith)! You are oblivious to it. Indeed, the truth and falsehood are not known by the statures of the people. Recognize truth, you will know its people. And know falsehood, you will recognize the one who brings it”.

But unfortunately, our barometer for gauging the written stuff prioritizes personalities first rather than prioritizing the scrutiny of that stuff. For instance, when we read a high-worded stuff or material, we cannot help but admiring the verbosity, eloquence, and the style of that written stuff. The wow factor overawes us, and we are obliged to say: the writer has done a nifty job. Such a bent of mind dampens our ability to think critically and evaluate holistically. Of course, it is a spot of bother for all of us. With this botheration, let us move forward, as it will help us keep on our toes. It will equip us with enough discernment that would shield us against the showy material that carries hue of prejudice and partiality. This prejudice finds its vivid manifestation in books written by orientalist cum nationalist historians about the histories of other nations and non-nationals. It holds true about accounts on Aurangzeb given by nationalist historians and writers of Orientalism. Here, we shall give few of the accounts. About Aurangzeb, British orientalist historian Stanley Lane-Pool writes, “for religion he persecuted Hindus and destroyed their temples”¹⁹. In the succeeding pages, he writes and I quote, he (Aurangzeb) could have followed the suits of his ancestors, who had given themselves to voluptuous ease to *wein, weib, und Gesang* (wine, dance and women), but still they were successful in holding the empire together.²⁰

Jawaharlal Nehru could not help but chip in by blaming Aurangzeb for putting the clock back. He lashed out at him, and alleged him of having undone what his ancestors had done. He attached sobriquet ‘bigot’ and austere puritan to his name, and also accused him of destroying Hindu temples, re-imposing hated impost (*Jizya*) on them, as well as alienating the sympathies of props and pillars of Mughal administration, namely Rajputs, by curtailing their influence.²¹ Quite similar outburst came from Shahid Nadeem, a Pakistani playwright, whose play ‘Dara’ portrays a different projection of both brothers. In the play, Aurangzeb is portrayed as the representative of a radical and a fanatical version of Islam, whereas Dara Sheikoh wins thundering applause for being a representative of moderate

and pluralistic version of Islam. One wonders, where have these variants come from? For, nothing of this sort has ever been hinted by Islam. Anyway, the play was really a buffo, as it won admiration not only from the home, but from the abroad also. The theme of the play can be encapsulated thus:

“The course of history may have been altered if instead of the radical and rigid Aurangzeb, his liberal and moderate brother Dara Shikoh had ascended to the throne, as Shah jahan had originally wished”.²²

Such accounts portray as if Aurangzeb was pursuing the theology of iconoclasm. However, when such accounts are scrutinized through historical prism, most of them will turn out to be mere propaganda driven. In historical writings, facts are not absolute. As E. H. Carr argued that “facts are like a fish in the fish mongers slab. It is historian who collects them, takes them home, cooks them and decides to which fact to give the floor and in whichever order and context”. Same is the case with orientalist and nationalist writers accounts about Aurangzeb. Right from the beginning, we have made it clear that Aurangzeb was not guilt free. He had his own bundle of mistakes to carry, from which he cannot be exempted. Of all of Aurangzeb’s crimes, those frequently hyped are the two. They are: he imposed *Jizya* (tax) on Hindus; he destroyed Hindu temples to assuage his fanatic thirst. So far as the first one is concerned, there is ample testimony that it was not implemented during the first twenty years of his rule. To call it a religiously motivated drive is a sheer fallacy and distortion of historical facts, says Indian historian Ram Punyani. According to him, Aurangzeb’s re-imposition of tax was purely driven by economic necessities rather than religious motivations. He further says that the amount of tax levied on Hindus was not so exorbitant that they could not afford to pay. The tax, he clarifies, was minimal (only 1.25%) and exempted various groups, including women, the elderly, and Brahmins (Puniyani, 2025). Furthermore, in Islamic state, levying tax from non- Muslims entitles them to enjoy the same rights as those of Muslims. The Islamic law of jurisprudence states unequivocally and unambiguously.

فإن بذلوا فلهم ما للمسلمين وعليهم ما على المسلمين لقول على انما بذلوا الجزية ليكون دماؤهم
كدماننا و اموالهم كما و النوا المراد بالبدل القبول

“if they agreed to pay *Jizya*, for them will be the same with justice as for the Muslims. And for them shall be the same bar as for Muslims. On the basis of Ali’s saying: they agreed to pay *Jizya* so that their bloods and belongings (*Jizya* payers) shall be as safe and protected as ours. Al-Qudoori says that the word (بتلو) means to accept”.

As far as, the charge of temple demolition is concerned, mostly it is exaggerated based on the cherry-picking of facts. Of course, Aurangzeb might have ordered the destruction of temples, and the decree might have been carried out, but the destruction might not have been as colossal as told by the historians. And this destruction had a purely political background, for which religion cannot be blamed. The charges of temple destruction were not something new of their own kind, rather they had a precedent. The charges of similar kind had been leveled against Mahmud Ghaznavi (971 AD-1030 AD), Feroz Tughlaq (1309 AD-1388 AD), but mainly against Aurangzeb (1618 AD-1707 AD). Behind these charges, there seems an orchestrated propaganda just to fan the flames of hatred between Muslims and Hindus, as was witnessed in contemporary India. In addition, such a narrative might have been spun to justify communal cul-de-sac, which in later times paved the way for the partition of British India into two religious majoritarian states. Above all else, it stands proven that temple demolition was a political move on the part of the emperor. According to Ishwardas, the renowned author of *Futuh-i-Alamgiri*, Aurangzeb’s moves do not portray his hostility and fanaticism towards Hindus. A passage from the introductory part of the book reads thus:

“His narration, regarding the imposition of *Jizya* on the *Zimmis*, the destruction of the temple of Mathura and Udaipur and the suppression of the Marathas, the Jats, the Rathors, the Satnamis, and other rebellions, do not portray Aurangzeb’s hostility and fanaticism towards Hindus or Hinduism. Though a Hindu, Ishwardas does not say that the emperor considering himself the champion of Islam, imposed the *jizya* on the *Zimmis*, or destroyed their temples”.

What is more trumpeted is the demolition of Mandirs (temples), but what goes unnoticed is the demolition of mosque at the behest of Aurangzeb Alamgir. It so happened that Tana Shah, the ruler of Golconda, refused to

pay tax under the pretext that his subjects were not able to pay it. To hide the money, he got the earth dug-deep, and placed all the money in it. Later on, he ordered the construction of mosque on the site. The construction was done only to make the emperor ignorant about all this. But, somehow the intelligence regarding the whereabouts of money reached emperor, who instantly ordered the desecration of the mosque to retrieve the concealed money.²³ What a sheer travesty it is! For, we are told about the destruction of temples, but we are not told about the donations given to temples by the emperor. It is evident from this example how history is murdered, to borrow the words of K. K. Aziz.

Conclusion

The ideals of hundred percent objectivity are unattainable. Nevertheless, a historian must strain every nerve to give such accounts which are, though not completely objective, but somewhat objectively closer to reality. For this, a historian must evaluate the authenticity, reliability, credibility, concreteness and plausibility of an account before taking it down. As facts do not speak by itself, it is historian who makes them speak. Hence, the onus of sifting the facts from fiction falls on the shoulders of the historian. The task of historian is not merely recording of events, but their evaluation also constitutes an integral part of his/her research work. Evaluation of an account is *sine qua non* for a nuanced and compelling set of historical facts. But unfortunately, the parochial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and grand nationalistic-cum-jingoistic considerations tempt the writers to misrepresent, mistranslated and casually construct the accounts, which obfuscate ground realities and objective truths. As a result, the readers get a distorted and concocted version of any past event. Besides, the tendency among historians to judge past events in the light of present norms and standards is something unhistorical. The better way of judging the past is that it has to be understood in the light of its own circumstances and situations. The present developments and norms cannot be applied to what occurred in the bygone years. But, here the rot sets in. The past personalities are judged in the light of present situations and norms. The same treatment was meted out to Aurangzeb by communal and orientalist. It is a fact that in the ruthless world of politics and of all political players, whether of recent present or of remote past, none was clean-handed. And the same holds good about Aurangzeb, for he had his bundle of mistakes to carry, and from which he cannot be let scoot free. However, the way he has been portrayed negatively and painted in black, calls for research and inquiry are needed so that the haze of myth shrouding him may be dispelled, and a

historical Aurangzeb come to the fore. Towards this end, a painstaking effort has been made by Audre Trushke and other modern writers, who vociferously challenged the prevalent narrative and put forward the one that is in line with the standards of historical research and based also on historical accounts rather than mythical, semi-mythological, myopic and fabricated narratives.

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