

## Akbar's Successors [Medieval History of India for UPSC]

This article will help the candidates get an idea about the reign of the successors of Akbar - Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb and so on.

The information from this article will be useful in the [IAS Exam](#).

### Mughal Dynasty after Akbar

#### Akbar's Successors

Akbar was succeeded by his son Jahangir after his death. In this section, we will learn all about Akbar's successors and their rule of the kingdom.

#### Jahangir/Salim (1605 - 1627 CE)

Salim was the eldest son of Jodha Bai and Akbar, who succeeded to the throne in c.1605 CE, after the death of Akbar. He assumed the title of Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir (conqueror of the world).

- He married Mehr-un-nisa in c.1611 CE (widow of Sher Afghan) who was also known as Nur Jahan (light of the world). Her father Itimad Ud daulah was a respectable man and was made chief Diwan by Jahangir. Her other family members also benefited from this alliance. Her elder brother, Asaf Khan was appointed as Khan-i-Saman, a post reserved for the nobles. In c. 1612 CE, Asaf Khan's elder daughter, Arjmand Banu Begum (later known as Mumtaz) married Jahangir's third son, Prince Khurram (later known as Shah Jahan).
- Nur Jahan immensely influenced the life of Jahangir. She was the only woman in the Mughal court and coins were struck in her name. Also, all royal farmans had her name. She even accompanied Jahangir in hunting.
- Jahangir had to face rebellions from his sons - Khusrau and Khurram.

#### Khusrau's rebellion

- Jahangir's eldest son (with Man Bai, daughter of Bhagwan Das), broke out into rebellion. However, Khusrau's rebellion proved to be short-lived. Jahangir defeated him at a battle near Lahore and soon afterwards he was captured and imprisoned. Arjun Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru was beheaded for supporting Khusrau.

#### Shah Jahan's rebellion

- Some modern historians are of the opinion that Nur Jahan, along with her father, brother and in alliance with Khurram, formed a group or 'junta' which managed Jahangir so that without its support no one could advance in his career.
- It is further said that Nur Jahan's political ambitions led to the differences between her and Shah Jahan. These differences drove Shah Jahan into rebellion against his father in (c. 1622 CE), since he felt that Jahangir was completely under the influence of Nur Jahan.
- However, some historians believe that Shah Jahan revolted against his father due to his personal ambitions.
- The immediate cause of the rebellion was Shah Jahan's refusal to proceed to Qandahar which had been besieged by the Persians. He was afraid that the campaign would be a long and difficult one and that intrigues would be hatched against him during his absence from the court. Hence, he put forth a number of demands like full command of the army which included the veterans of the Deccan, complete sway over Punjab, control over a number of important forts, etc.
- In the battle near Delhi, Shah Jahan was defeated by the forces led by Mahabat Khan. This rebellion distracted the Mughals for 4 years till c. 1626 CE when both father and son reconciled. This rebellion led to the loss of Qandahar and emboldened the Deccan to recover all the territories surrendered to the Mughals during Akbar's reign.

### **Mughal expansion under Jahangir**

- The main achievement of Jahangir was the settlement of the outstanding dispute with Mewar. In c. 1615 CE, Amar Singh of Mewar (son of Maharana Pratap) submitted before Jahangir. Rana's son, Karan Singh was made mansabdar with the rank of 5000, which had earlier been accorded to the rulers of Jodhpur, Bikaner and Amber. Thus, Jahangir completed the task begun by Akbar, and further strengthened the alliance with the Rajputs.
- With the help of Maratha sardars, Khan-i-Khanan inflicted a crushing defeat on the combined forces of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda in c. 1616 CE. This defeat shook the Deccani alliance against the Mughals.
- Jahangir was the first Muslim ruler to annex Kangra (in c. 1620 CE).
- In c. 1622 CE, Mughals lost Qandahar and was captured by Shah Abbas of Persia.
- Jahangir tried to follow an expansionist policy in the Deccan, however, he achieved little success. This was mainly due to Malik Ambar, who led the Deccani struggle against the Mughals. Malik Ambar with the help of the Marathas and Ibrahim Adil Shah, ruler of Bijapur, made it difficult for the Mughals to consolidate their position in Berar, Ahmednagar and Balaghat.
- During Jahangir's reign, conflict arose in the east. In c. 1608 CE, Jahangir sent Islam Khan, the grandson of Sheikh Salim Chisti (famous Sufi saint) to Bengal. Islam Khan handled the revolt with great energy and foresight. He defeated the Afghan rebels and thus Mughal power was firmly established in East Bengal.

After the death of Jahangir in c. 1627 CE, Shah Jahan reached Agra and with the support of the nobles, chief Diwan Asaf Khan, and the army, Shah Jahan ascended the throne. Nur Jahan was given a pension and lived a retired life till her death 18 years later, and was buried at Lahore.

- During Jahangir's reign, the British visited Machilipatnam. Captain Hawkins (c. 1608-1611CE) and [Thomas Roe](#) (c. 1615- 1619 CE) visited his court. Thomas Roe got the farman for setting up an English factory at Surat.
- He mostly stayed in Lahore and banned the killing of animals for food on Tuesdays and Fridays.
- He wrote his autobiography, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri in Persian. He also patronised Farhang-i-Jahangiri, a valuable dictionary. During his reign, Khafi Khan wrote Muntakhab-i-Lubab and Hamid Lahori wrote Padshah Namah.
- Constructing buildings with marble and decorating the walls with floral designs made of semi-precious stones (Pietra Dura) started during his reign.
- He visited Kashmir and laid a number of gardens there like Shalimar Bagh, Nishat Bagh.
- He built the Moti Masjid at Lahore and also his own mausoleum at Lahore.
- Mughal painting reached its peak under Jahangir. The use of “halo” or “Divine lights” behind the king's head started under him.

Shah Jahan (c. 1628- 1658 CE)

**Shah Jahan ascended the throne in c.1628 CE at Agra.** His mother was a Hindu Jagat Gosain. He was married to Arjmand Banu Begum (Mumtaz Mahal).

- As a ruler, Shah Jahan's first concern was to recover the territories in the Deccan which had been lost to the Nizam Shahi ruler. He deputed Khan-i-Jahan Lodhi for this purpose but he failed and he was recalled to the court. Soon, Khan-i-Jahan Lodhi joined the Nizam Shahi ruler. This infuriated Shah Jahan and he decided to follow an aggressive policy to recover lost territories of the Deccan. His Deccan policy was more successful than Akbar and Jahangir. After ascertaining the facts, he came to the conclusion that there could be no peace for the Mughals in the Deccan as long as Ahmednagar continued as an independent state. He successfully isolated Ahmednagar by winning over Bijapur and the Marathas. Fath Khan, the son of Malik Ambar, also joined the Mughals and Shah Jahan appointed Mahbat Khan as Mughal viceroy of Deccan. But the conflict with the Deccan states continued and finally, in c 1636 CE, ahdnama (treaties) were signed with Bijapur and Golconda.
  - According to the agreement with Bijapur, Adil Shah agreed to recognise the Mughal suzerainty, to pay an indemnity of twenty lakh rupees and to not interfere in the affairs of Golconda which was brought under Mughal protection. Any dispute between Bijapur and Golconda was to be referred to the Mughal emperor for arbitration. Adil Shah also agreed to cooperate with the Mughals in reducing Shahji to submission.

- In return for these, territory worth about twenty lakh huns (about 80 lakh rupees) annually belonging to Ahmednagar was ceded to Bijapur. Shah Jahan also sent to Adil Shah a solemn farman impressed with the mark of the emperor's palm that the terms of this treaty would never be violated.
  - Shah Jahan completed the settlement of the Deccan by entering into a treaty with Golconda as well. The ruler agreed to include the name of Shah Jahan in the khutba and to exclude the name of the Iranian emperor from it. Qutb Shah took an oath of loyalty towards the Mughal emperor. The annual tribute of four lakh huns which Golconda was previously paying to Bijapur was remitted, instead, Golconda was required to pay two lakh huns annually to the Mughal emperor.
  - The treaties of c. 1636 CE with Bijapur and Golconda enabled Shah Jahan to realise the ultimate objectives of Akbar. The suzerainty of the Mughal emperor was now accepted over the length and breadth of the country. Peace with the Mughals enabled the Deccani states to expand their territories towards the south.
- In the decade following the ahdnama of c. 1636 CE, Bijapur and Golconda overran the rich and fertile land of Karnataka, from the river Krishna to Tanjore and beyond. In a short span of time, the territories of these two states were more than doubled and they reached the climax of their power and prosperity. However, rapid expansion weakened the internal cohesion these states had. Ambitious nobles such as Shahji and his son Shivaji, in Bijapur and Mir Jumla, the legendary noble of Golconda started carving out spheres of influence for themselves and this again led to the conflicting atmosphere in the Deccan. The Mughals demanded a price for their benevolent neutrality during the expansionist policy of these states. In c. 1656 CE following the death of Muhammad Adil Shah, treaties were ignored. Shah Jahan asked his son, Aurangzeb, to conquer and annex the territories of the Deccan kingdom.
- In c. 1632 CE, Shah Jahan defeated the Portuguese near Hugli due to regular abuse of trading privileges by them.
- Shah Jahan captured Qandahar (in c. 1639 CE) and fortified it, but Persia wrestled Qandahar from the Mughals. Shah Jahan launched a prolonged campaign in the northwest frontier to recover Qandahar and other ancestral lands. However, realising the futility of his ambition, he stopped fighting and Qandahar became a permanent loss for the Mughals.
- Shah Jahan's reign is considered the "The Golden Age" of the Mughal empire.
  - Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world. Its construction was started in c. 1631 CE and was completed in 22 years. Its design was prepared by Ustad Isa and Isa Muhammad Effendi and the main dome was designed by Ismail Khan.
  - During Shah Jahan's reign, mosque building reached its peak. He constructed the Moti Masjid at Agra (built in white marble), the Sheesh Mahal, Musalman Burj at Agra (where he spent his last days in captivity) and Jama Masjid at Delhi (in red stone).
  - Fort building also reached its peak during the reign of Shah Jahan. The famous Red Fort at Delhi with its Rang Mahal, Diwan-i-am and Diwan-i-khas was built by him. He also

built Shalimar Bagh in Lahore and the city of Shahjahanabad. He also got Bebadal Khan to build the Peacock Throne, on which is inscribed the famous Amir Khusrao couplet “if there is paradise on earth, it is here”.

- Shah Jahan’s reign is described by French travellers Bernier and Tavernier, Italian traveller Manucci, and Peter Mundy described famine during Shah Jahan’s time.
- Shah Jahan also patronised many authors and historians like Inayat Khan who wrote Shah Jahan Nama, his son, Dara Shikoh translated the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads into the Persian language.
- The last years of Shah Jahan’s reign were clouded by a bitter war of succession among his four sons - Dara Shikoh (eldest and crown prince), Shuja (governor of Bengal), Aurangzeb (governor of Deccan) and Murad Baksh (governor of Malwa and Gujarat). Towards the end of c. 1657 CE, Shah Jahan fell ill at Delhi for some time but later recovered. But the princes started fighting for the Mughal throne.
- In the battle of Samugarh (c. 1658 CE), Aurangzeb defeated Dara Shikoh, which practically decided the issue of succession. Aurangzeb crowned himself with the title of “Alamgir” (conqueror of the world) but the civil war continued for more than two years. In the battle of Khajwa (Allahabad) Aurangzeb defeated Shuja and emerged victorious. The battle of Deorai (c. 1659 CE) was the last battle [Dara Shikoh](#) fought against Aurangzeb. Dara Shikoh was again defeated by Aurangzeb and he had to flee to Afghanistan. However, he was captured, imprisoned and later, executed by Aurangzeb. After the battle of Deorai, the second coronation of Aurangzeb took place.
- Aurangzeb entered the Agra Fort and forced Shah Jahan to surrender. Shah Jahan was confined to the Agra Fort and strictly put under vigil. Shah Jahan was lovingly nursed by his daughter, Jahan Ara. He died in c. 1666 CE and was buried beside his wife’s grave in the Taj Mahal.

#### Aurangzeb (c. 1658 - 1707 CE)

Aurangzeb was one of the ablest of the Mughal kings. He assumed the title “Alamgir” (world conqueror). Aurangzeb ruled for almost 50 years and during his long reign, the Mughal empire reached its territorial climax. It stretched from Kashmir in the north to Jingsi in the south, and from Hindukush in the west to Chittagong in the east.

- **North-East Conquest** - In c. 1662 CE, Mir Jumla, the governor of Bengal led the expedition against the Ahoms. He penetrated up to the limit of the Ahom kingdom, and forced the Ahom king to sign a favourable treaty (c. 1663 CE). Mir Jumla died soon after his brilliant victory. In c. 1667 CE, the Ahoms renewed the contest and recovered the areas ceded to the Mughals. Shaista Khan, who succeeded Mir Jumla as the governor of Bengal, captured the island of Sondip and Chittagong. He also chastised Arakanese pirates.
- **Conquest of Deccan** - When Aurangzeb became Mughal emperor, for the first 25 years he concentrated on the northern regions. At that time, Maratha ruler [Shivaji](#) carved out an



independent kingdom in the territories of north and south Konkan. To contain the spread of the Marathas, Aurangzeb decided to invade Bijapur and Golconda. He defeated Sikandar Shah of Bijapur and annexed his kingdom (c. 1686 CE). Then he proceeded against Golconda, eliminated the Qutb Shahi dynasty and annexed it (c. 1687 CE). Along with Bijapur and Golconda, he also seized the territory of Karnataka. Aurangzeb made Khirki, founded by Malik Ambar, the capital of Mughal Deccan and named it Aurangabad.

- In fact, the destruction of the Deccan kingdoms is considered to be a political blunder on the part of Aurangzeb. The barrier between the Mughals and the Marathas was removed and there ensued a direct confrontation between them. Also, his Deccan campaigns exhausted the Mughal treasury. According to J.N Sarkar, the Deccan ulcer ruined Aurangzeb.

- **Religious Policy and Rebellions**

- It is believed that the various rebellions that took place during Aurangzeb's reign were the outcome of his harsh religious policy. This included the rebellion of the Jat peasantry at Mathura. In c. 1669 CE, the revolt was under the leadership of a local zamindar, Gokla. In a stiff battle, the Jats were defeated, Gokla captured and executed. In c. 1685 CE, there was a second uprising of the Jats under the leadership of Rajaram and later, under his successor, Churaman (in c. 1691 CE). In c. 1672 CE, there was a conflict between the Satnamis and the Mughal state at Narnaul. The satnamis were mostly peasants, artisans and considered of 'low caste'.
- Aurangzeb was a staunch and orthodox Muslim in his personal life. Aurangzeb's measures were designed to convert India from a dar-ul-Harb (land of infidels) into dar-ul-Islam (land of Muslims). At the beginning of his rule, he forbade the kalima being inscribed on coins and abolished the festival of Navroz (as it was considered a Zoroastrian practice favoured by the Safavid rulers of Iran). The celebration of Muharram was stopped. In fact, his invasions against the Deccan Sultanates were partly due to his hatred of the Shia faith. In c. 1675 CE, he executed the ninth Sikh Guru, [Guru Tegh Bahadur](#), which resulted in the rebellion of the Sikh community against him.
- Muhtasibs were appointed in all the provinces. These officers were entrusted with the job of enforcing moral codes and the Sharia. He forbade singing in the court, however, instrumental music and naubat (royal band) continued. It is pertinent to mention that the largest number of Persian works on classical music was written in Aurangzeb's rule and that Aurangzeb himself was proficient in playing the veena. Aurangzeb discontinued the practice of Jharokha darshan (showing himself to the public from the balcony), since he considered it anti-Islamic.
- Initially, Aurangzeb banned the construction of new Hindu temples and the repair of old ones, but later he gradually started destroying Hindu temples. A number of temples such as the famous temple of Vishwanath at Banaras and the temple of Keshava Rai at Mathura built by Bir Singh Deo Bundela in the reign of Jahangir were destroyed and mosques erected in their place. In c. 1679 CE, he reimposed jizya and pilgrim tax.

- Aurangzeb's Rajput policy also alienated the Rajputs and they gradually lost their position in the administrative set-up. Aurangzeb's policy towards Mewar and Marwar was clumsy and blundering and brought no advantage of any kind to the Mughals. He wanted to divide the state of Marwar between the two branches of the family. The Rathore sardars led by Durgadas rejected the proposal of the division of state which they felt would be against the best interests of the state. The ruler of Mewar (Rana Raj Singh) strongly opposed the Mughal interference in the internal affairs of the Rajputs, such as the questions of succession. This led to the long drawn out war of the Mughals with Mewar and Marwar which weakened the Mughal alliance with the Rajputs. It created doubts about the firmness of Mughal support to old and trusted allies and the ulterior motives of Aurangzeb.
  - Aurangzeb's conflicts in the northeast and with the Jats, Afghans, Sikhs and Rajputs put a strain on the empire. However, the real conflict lay in the Deccan.
- **Personality and character of Aurangzeb**
  - Aurangzeb was a God-fearing Muslim. He did not like ostentation and led a simple life. He was a strict disciplinarian and never spared himself or his subordinates in the tasks of government. He was devoted to his religion, offered namaz five times a day and strictly observed fast in the month of Ramadan. He did not consume wine. He earned for his personal expenses by copying the Quran (holy book of Muslims) and selling those copies. Due to all these qualities, he began to be regarded as a Zinda Pir (living saint). He was a learned person and proficient in Arabic and Persian languages.
- **Art and Architecture during his reign**
  - He constructed the Moti Masjid at Delhi and the Badshahi Mosque at Lahore.
  - Ishwar Das Nagar authored Fatahat-i-alamgiri.
  - Nimat Khan Ali authored Wakai-i-Hyderabad, the conquest of Golconda by Aurangzeb.
  - Mirza Mohammad Qasim authored Alamgirnama.

### Economic and Social life under the Mughals

During the Mughal rule, many European travellers and traders came to India and their accounts contain valuable information regarding the social and economic conditions of India. In general, they described the wealth and prosperity of India and also the luxurious life of the aristocratic class. On the other side, they also mentioned the poverty and sufferings of the ordinary masses like artisans and peasants. Nikitin observed that the people of the Deccan were bare-footed, possibly due to the high cost of leather. The nobles of the Mughal period formed a privileged class. Most of them were foreigners such as Turks and Afghans and got readily assimilated into the Indian society and culture.

Also read: [India under the Mughals](#)

### Growth of Trade

- The Indian trading classes were large in number and spread throughout the country.

- They were well organized and highly professional. Local traders were called baniks while Seth, Bohra traders specialized in long-distance trade.
- Banjaras were another class of traders who carried goods in bulk. The banjaras used to move long distances with their goods on the back of oxen.
- The trading communities belonged to all faiths/religions. For instance, the Gujarati traders included Hindus, Muslims and Jains.
- In Rajasthan, Oswals, Agarwals and Maheshwaris were called the Marwaris.
- Afghanis, Khattris and Multanis traded with Central Asia.
- The Chettis of the Coromandel coast and the Muslim merchants of Malabar were the most important trading communities in South India.
- Bengal exported sugar, rice as well as delicate muslin and silk.
- The Coromandel coast became a centre of textile production.
- Gujarat was an entry point for foreign items. From there, fine textiles and silk were taken to north India.
- Items like food grains and indigo were exported from north India through Gujarat. It also became the distribution centre for the luxury products of Kashmir such as shawls and carpets.
- Certain metals like copper and tin, war horses and luxury items like ivory were the major goods of import.
- The growth of foreign trade led to the increased import of gold and silver in the 17th century.
- The foreign traders have described Indian traders as alert and brisk.
- The foreign trade witnessed further increase due to the setting up of the European trading companies and their direct participation in the Euro-Asian and intra-Asian trade.

### Frequently Asked Questions About Akbar's successors

#### **Under which Mughal Emperor did the empire begin to break up?**

During the reign of Muhammad Shah, the empire began to break up, and vast tracts of central India passed from Mughal to Maratha hands.

#### **When did the Mughal Empire reach its greatest territorial extent?**

Aurangzeb expanded the empire to include a huge part of South Asia. At its peak, the kingdom stretched to 3.2 million square kilometres, including parts of what are now India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.