



Memoirs of Jahangir

by Jahangir

Jahangir ruled the Mughal Empire from 1605 until his death in 1627. Jahangir's memoirs record significant events that occurred each year of his reign. They tend to be autobiographical and offer insight into his character and decision making process.

Primary Source:

On Thursday, the eighth of Jumada-s-sani, 1014 A.H. (Oct. 12, 1605 A.D.), I ascended the throne at Agra, in the thirty-eighth year of my age. The first order which I issued was for the setting up of a Chain of Justice, so that if the officers of the courts of justice should fail in the investigation of the complaints of the oppressed and in granting them **redress**, the injured persons might come to this chain and shake it, and thus give notice of their wrongs. I ordered that the chain should be made of pure gold and be thirty *gaz* long (about sixty feet), with sixty bells upon it. One end was firmly attached to a battlement of the fort of **Agra**, the other to a stone column on the bank of the river.

I established twelve ordinances, which were observed as the common rule of practice throughout my dominions:

1. Prohibition of cesses: I forbad the levy of duties under the names of *tamgha* (stamp-taxes) and *mir-bahri* (port-dues), together with all forms of taxes which the fief-holders of every province and division had been in the habit of exacting for their own benefit.

2. Regulation concerning highway robbery and theft:

In those roads which were the scenes of robbery and theft, and in those portions of road which were far from habitations, the fief-holders of the neighborhood were required to build a shelter for travellers or a mosque, and were also commanded to sink a well to promote **cultivation** and to induce people to settle there. If these places were near lands belonging to the **exchequer**, the government officials were to carry out these provisions.

Glossary:

redress: compensation

Agra: a city in the northern region of what is now India

cultivation: farming

exchequer: the national treasurer

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3. Rights of merchants and of inheritance of property:

First, no one was to open the packages of merchants on the roads without their consent. Secondly, when any infidel or **Mussulman** died in any part of my dominions, his property and effects were to be allowed to descend by inheritance without interference from any one. When there was no heir, officers were to be appointed to take charge of the property and to expend it according to the law of Islam in building mosques and shelters for travellers, as well as in repairing broken bridges and also in digging tanks and sinking wells....

5. Prohibition of seizing houses and of cutting off the

noses and ears of criminals: No one was permitted to take up his **abode** in the dwelling of another. I likewise issued an order prohibiting everyone from cutting off the noses or ears of criminals for any offence, and I made a vow to heaven that I would never inflict this punishment on any one.

6. Prohibition of taking the property of another without his

consent: Fief-holders and officers of lands belonging to the *exchequer* were forbidden to take the property of the peasants by force or to cultivate them on their own account; nor were these officials allowed to intermarry with the people in their districts without special permission.

7. Building of hospitals and appointment of physicians

to attend the sick: Hospitals were to be built in large cities and doctors were to be appointed to attend the sick. The expenses were to be paid from the royal treasury.

8. Prohibition of the slaughter of animals on certain days:

In imitation of my honored father, the Emperor Akbar, I directed that every year from the eighteenth of Rabi'-al-awwal, my birthday, no animals should be slaughtered for a number of days corresponding to the years of my age. In every week, moreover, two days were to be exempted from slaughter: Thursday, the day of my **accession**, and Sunday, the birthday of my father.

Glossary:

Mussulman: a Muslim

abode: a place of residence

accession: rise to power

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9. Respect paid to Sunday: My father used to hold Sunday blessed and to pay it great respect, because it is dedicated to the Great Luminary and because it is the day on which the Creation was begun. Throughout my dominions this was one of the days on which it was forbidden to kill animals....

11. Confirmation of grants: All those lands throughout my dominions which were devoted to the purposes of prayer and praise, I confirmed according to the terms of the grant in the hands of each grantee. Miran, who is of the purest race of Sayyids in Hindustan and who held the office of justice in the days of my father, was directed to look after the poor every day.

12. Amnesty for all prisoners in forts and in prisons of every kind: All prisoners who had long been confined in forts or shut up in prisons I ordered to be set free.

Glossary:

H.A.P.P.Y. Analysis Worksheet

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