



## SHIKASHTA- NASTALIQ PERSIAN FARMANS IN COURT OF AURANGZEB ALAMGIR: A CASE STUDY OF “TARIKH-I- DARGAH-I-MUALLA” PRESERVED IN BIKANER ARCHIVES

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*This book contains and is based on original Akhbarats from Aurangzeb's Court as preserved at the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, contemporary official records and credible Persian sources*

### **Introduction**

Aurangzeb, Emperor Shah Jahan's sixth child, was born on 24th October 1618 at Dohad in Madhya Pradesh, and wrested India's crown from his father before the end of June 1658, after defeating his brother Crown Prince Dara Shukoh's armies, first at Dharmat near Ujjain (15th April 1658) and again at Samugarh on 29th May 1658. The War of Succession to the richest throne in the world was practically over with this victory, and Aurangzeb secured his position by making Murad, his brother and accomplice in his impetuous pursuit for power, his prisoner, by treachery, on 25th June. He had already made his old father Emperor Shah Jahan a prisoner in the Agra Fort (8th June 1658). Shah Jahan survived his confinement by nearly eight years and the disgraceful manner of his burial (Exhibit No. 6) will ever remain a stigma on this unscrupulous son. Aurangzeb's advent to the throne in his father's life time was not welcomed by the people of India because of the treacherous manner it was achieved; but public opinion became all the more hostile towards him when Prince Dara Shukoh, the favourite son of Shah Jahan, the translator of the Upanishads (Exhibit No. 2), and a truly liberal and enlightened Musalman, was taken prisoner on the Indian border, as he was about to enter Persia. Dara was paraded in a most undignified manner on the streets of Delhi on 29th August 1659. The French Doctor, Bernier, was an eye-witness to the scene and was deeply moved by the popular sympathy for Dara (Exhibit No. 3) which so much alarmed Aurangzeb that he contrived to obtain a decree from his Clerics announcing death-sentence for his elder brother on the charge of apostasy (Exhibit No. 5). Throughout the War of Succession, Aurangzeb had maintained that he was not interested in acquiring the throne and that his only object was to ward off the threat to Islam, which was inevitable in case Dara Shukoh came to power. Many, including his brother Murad, were deceived by this posture. After his formal accession in Delhi (5th June 1659) he posed as a defender of Islam who would rule according to the directions of the Shari'at, and with the advice of the Clerics or Ulama for whom the doctrines, rules, principles and directives, as laid down and interpreted in the 7th and 8th century Arabia and Iraq, were inviolable and unchangeable in all conditions, in all countries, and for all times to come. One of the main objectives of Aurangzeb's policy was to demolish Hindu Temples. When he ordered (13th October 1666) removal of the carved railing, which Prince Dara

Shukoh had presented to Keshava Rai Temple at Mathura, he had observed ‘In the religion of the Musalmans it is improper even to look at a Temple’, and that it was totally unbecoming of a Muslim to act like Dara Shukoh (Exhibit No. 8). This was followed by destruction of the famous Kalka Temple in Delhi (Exhibit Nos. 16 & 17). In 1669, shortly after the death of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber, a general order was issued (9th April 1669) for the demolition of Temples and established schools of the Hindus throughout the empire and banning public worship (Exhibit Nos. 19 & 20). Soon after this, the great Temple of Keshava Rai was demolished (Jan.-Feb. 1670) (Exhibit No. 23 & 24) and in its place a lofty mosque was erected. The idols, the author of *Maasir-i-‘Alamgiri* informs, were carried to Agra and buried under the steps of the mosque built by Begum Sahiba, in order to be continually trodden upon by the Musalmans, and the name of ancient and sacred town Mathura was changed to Islamabad. The painting (Exhibit No. 24) is thus no fancy imagination of the artist but depicts what actually took place.

This was followed by Aurangzeb’s order to demolish the highly venerated Temple of Vishwanath at Banaras (Persian Text, Exhibit No. 22), Keshava Rai Temple (Jan.-Feb. 1670) (Persian Text and Painting, Exhibit Nos. 23 & 24), and of Somanatha (Exhibit No. 21). To save the idol of Shrinathji from being desecrated, the Gosain carried it to Rajputana, where Maharana Raj Singh received it formally at Sihad village, assuring the priest that Aurangzeb would have to trample over the bodies of one lakh of his brave troops, before he could even touch the idol (Exhibit No. 25). Aurangzeb’s zeal for Temple destruction became much more intense during war conditions. The opportunity to earn religious merit by demolishing hundreds of Temples soon came to him in 1679 when, after the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur in the Kabul Subah, he tried to eliminate the Rathors of Marwar as a political power in Rajputana. But Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar, in line with the great traditions of his House, came out in open support of the Rathors. This led to war with both Mewar and Marwar during which the Temples built on the bank of Rana’s lake were destroyed by his orders (Exhibit No. 31) and also about two hundred other Temples in the environs of Udaipur (Exhibit No. 33), including the famous Jagannath Rai Temple built at a great cost in front of the Maharana’s palace which was bravely defended by a handful of Rajputs (Exhibit Nos. 32 & 34). Not only this, when Aurangzeb visited Chittor to have a view of the famous fort, he ordered the demolition of 63 Temples there which included some of the finest Temples of Kumbha’s time and even earlier (Exhibit No. 35). From Marwar (in Western Rajasthan) alone were brought several cart-loads of idols which, as per Aurangzeb’s orders, were cast in the yard of the Court and under the steps of Jama Masjid (Exhibit No. 30). Such uncivilized and arrogant conduct of the Mughal Emperor alienated the Hindus for ever, though they continued to be tolerant towards his creed. In June 1681, orders, in a laconic two-liner, were given for the demolition of the highly venerated Jagannath Temple in Orissa (Exhibit No. 38). Shortly afterwards, in September 1682, the famous Bindu-Madhav Temple in Banaras was also demolished as per the Emperor’s orders (Exhibit No. 42). On 1st September 1681, while proceeding to the Deccan, where his rebel son Prince Akbar, escorted by Durga Das Rathore, had joined Chhatrapati Shivaji’s son, Shambhaji, thus creating a serious problem for him, Aurangzeb ordered that all the Temples on the way should be destroyed. It was a

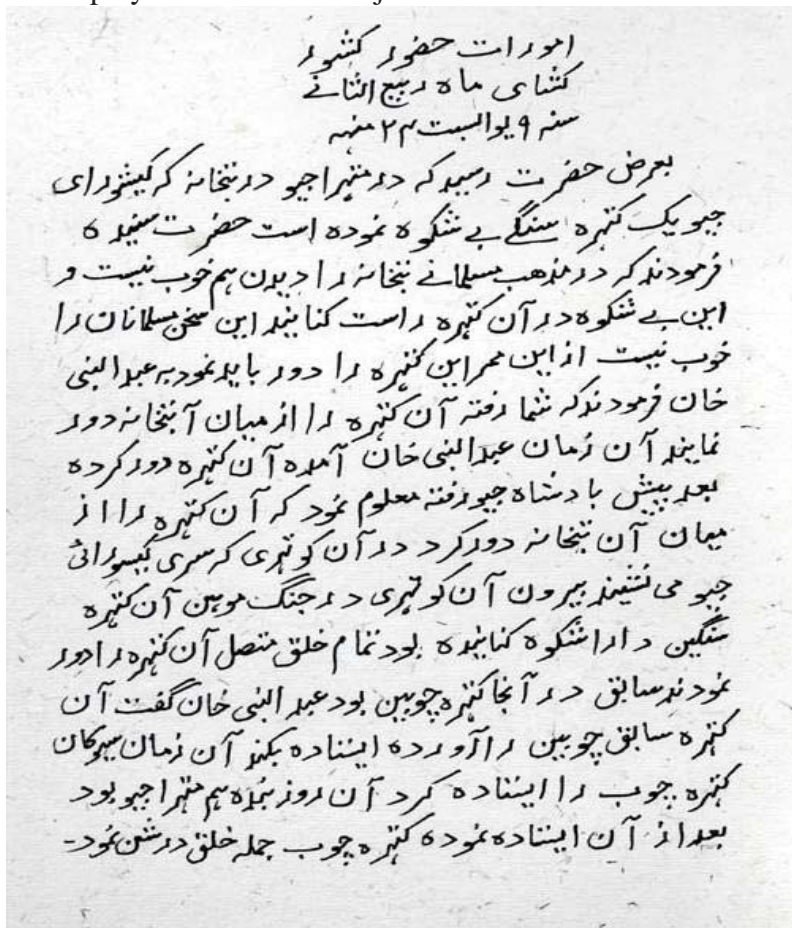
comprehensive order not distinguishing between old and newly built Temples (Exhibit No. 40). But in the district of Burhanpur, where there were a large number of Temples with their doors closed, he preferred to keep them as such, as the Muslims were too few in number in the district and no purpose would have been served by giving them the shape of mosques so that the Muslims could perform namaz in them (Exhibit No. 41). In his religious frenzy, even Temples of the loyal and friendly Amber state were not spared, such as the famous Temple of Jagdish at Goner near Amber (Exhibit Nos. 30). In fact, his misguided ardour for Temple destruction did not abate almost till the end of his life, for as late as 1st January 1705 we find him ordering that the Temple of Pandharpur be demolished and the butchers of the camp be sent to slaughter cows in the Temple precincts (Akhbarat 49-7).

The number of such provocative acts of Aurangzeb make a long list but here only a few have been highlighted supported by evidence, mostly contemporary official records of his reign and credible Persian sources.

In obedience to the Quranic injunction, Aurangzeb reimposed Jizyah on the Hindus on 2nd April 1679 (Exhibit No. 27), which had been abolished by Emperor Akbar in 1564, causing widespread anger and resentment among the Hindus of the country. A massive peaceful demonstration against this tax in Delhi was ruthlessly crushed. This hated tax involved heavy economic burden on the vast number of the poor Hindus and caused humiliation to each and every Hindu (Exhibit No. 28). In the same vein were his discriminatory measures against the Hindus in the form of exemption of the Muslims from the taxes (Exhibit No. 12), ban on atishbazi and restriction on Diwali (Exhibit No. 10), replacement of Hindu officials by Muslims so that the Emperor's prayers for the welfare of Muslims and glory of Islam, which were proving ineffective, be answered (Exhibit Nos. 9 & 15). He also imposed a ban on ziyarat and gathering of the Hindus at religious shrines, such as of Shitla Mata and folk Gods like Pir Pabu (Exhibit No. 18), another ban imposed was on their travelling in Palkis, or riding elephants and Arab-Iraqi horses, as Hindus should not carry themselves with the same dignity as the Muslims! (Exhibit No. 47). In the same vein came brazen attempts to convert Hindus by inducement, coercion (Exhibit Nos. 37 & 39) or by offering Qanungoship (Exhibit No. 36) and to honour the converts in the open Court. His personal directions were that a Hindu male be given Rs.4 and a Hindu female Rs.2 on conversion (Exhibit No. 43). "Continue giving liberally", Aurangzeb had ordered when it was reported to him that the Faujdar of Bithur, Shaikh Abdul Momin, had converted 150 Hindus and had given them naqd (cash) and saropas (dresses of honour) (Exhibit No. 11). Such display of Islamic orthodoxy by the State under Aurangzeb gave strength and purpose to the resistance movements such as of the Marathas, the Jats, the Bundelas and the Sikhs (Exhibit No. 26). On the 12th May 1666, the dignity with which Shivaji carried himself in the Mughal court and defied the Emperor's authority, won him spontaneous admiration of the masses. Parkaldas, an official of Amber (Jaipur State) wrote in his letter dated 29th May 1666, to his Diwan. "Now that after coming to the Emperor's presence Shivaji has shown such audacity and returned harsh and strong replies, the public extols him for his bravery all the more ..." (Exhibit No. 7). When Shivaji passed away on April 1680 at the age of 53 only, he had already carved a sufficiently large kingdom, his

Swarajya, both along the western coast and some important areas in the east as well.

Aurangzeb could never pardon himself for his negligence in letting Shivaji escape from his well laid trap and wrote in his Will (Exhibit No. 48) that it made him "to labour hard (against the Marathas) to the end of my life (as a result of it)." He did not realize that it was his own doing: the extremely cruel manner, even for those times, in which he put to death Shivaji's son, Shambhaji, (Exhibit No. 46) which made the Maratha king a martyr in the eyes of the masses and with that commenced the People's War in Maharashtra and the Deccan which dug the grave of the Mughal empire. Till the very end Aurangzeb never understood that the main pillars of the government are the affection and support of the people and not mere compliance of the religious directives originating from a foreign land in the seventh-eighth centuries. His death after a long and ruinous reign lasting half a century, ended an eventful epoch in the history of India<sup>1</sup>. He left behind a crumbling empire, a corrupt and inefficient administration, a demoralized army, a discredited government facing bankruptcy and alienated subjects.



Umurat-i-Hazur Kishwar-Kashai, Julus (R.Yr.) 9, Rabi II 24 / 13 October 1666.

'It was reported to the Emperor (Aurangzeb) that in the Temple of Keshava Rai at Mathura, there was a stone railing presented by 'Bishukoh' (one without dignity i.e.

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Irfan Habib's "An Atlas of Mughal Empire", Oxford University Press, 1982

Prince Dara, Aurangzeb's elder brother). On hearing it, the Emperor observed, "In the religion of the Musalmans, it is improper even to look at a Temple and this Bishukoh had installed this kathra (barrier railing). Such an act is totally unbecoming of a Musalman. This railing should be removed (forthwith)." His Majesty ordered Abdun Nabi Khan to go and remove the kathra, which was in the middle of the Temple. The Khan went and removed it. After doing it he had audience. He informed that the idol of Keshava Rai was in the inner chamber. The railing presented by Dara was in front of the chamber and that, formerly, it was of wood. Inside the kathra used to stand the sevakas of the shrine (pujaris etc.) and outside it stood the people (khalq)'.

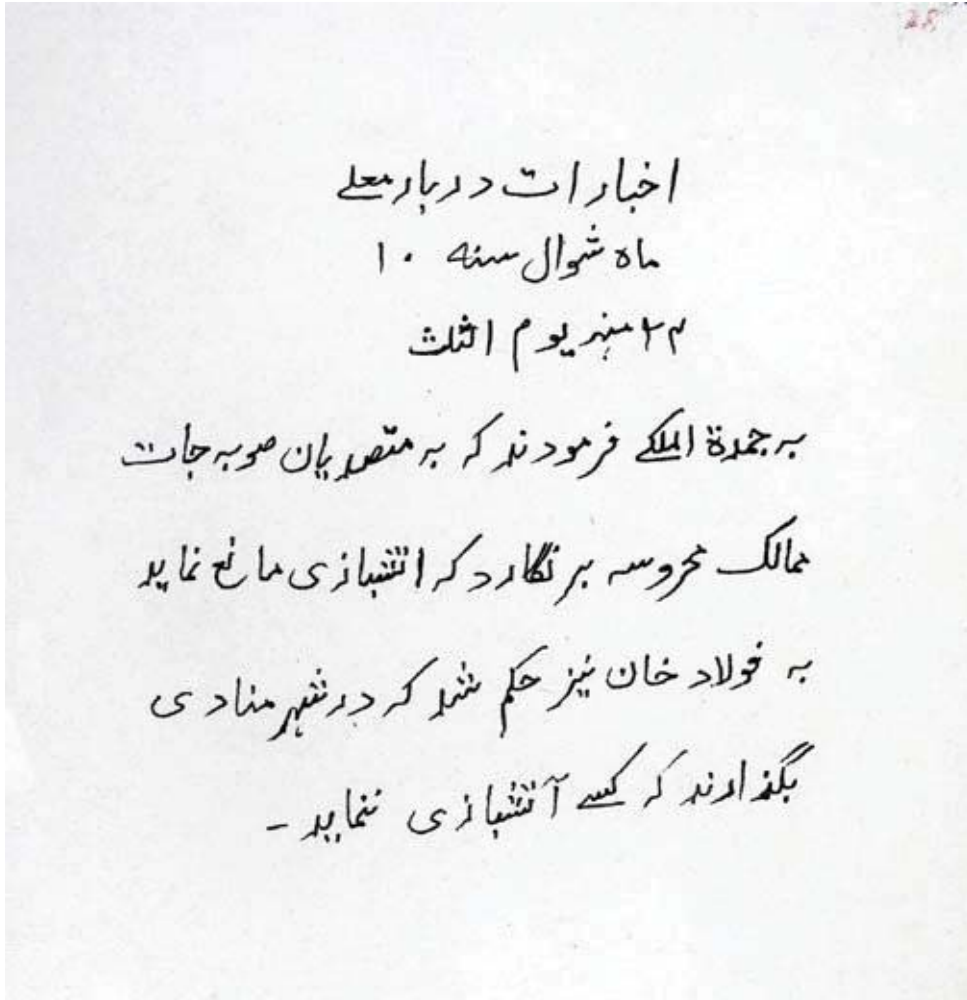
Aurangzeb's solemn observation recorded in his own Court's bulletin that "In the religion of the Musalmans it is improper even to look at a Temple" and therefore, presentation of a stone railing to Keshava Rai Temple by Dara was "totally unbecoming of a Musalman" casts serious doubts about a few instances of religious toleration and Temple grants attributed to him. Only two years before his long awaited death, he had ordered (1st January 1705) to "demolish the Temple of Pandharpur and to take the butchers of the camp there and slaughter cows in the Temple ... It was done." Akhbarat, 49-7, cited in J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzeb, Vol.III, 189).



Hindu Chowkinavis and Amins of the Haft-chowkis to be replaced by the Musalmans. Siyaha Akhbarat Darbar Mu'alla, Julus (R. Yr.) 10, Zilhijja 16/30 May

1667 “Orders were issued by the Sublime Court to dismiss the Hindu Chowkinavis and to appoint in their place Musalmans, and, likewise, a way should be found for replacing the Amins of the Haft-chowkis by the Musalmans.”

Such dismissal of Hindu officials (Chowkinavis and Amins of Haft-chowkis) on the ground of religion foreshadowed the other discriminatory measures which Aurangzeb was to take in the coming years, influenced by the Shari‘at and his own religious convictions, thereby alienating the Hindus towards the Mughal government for ever.

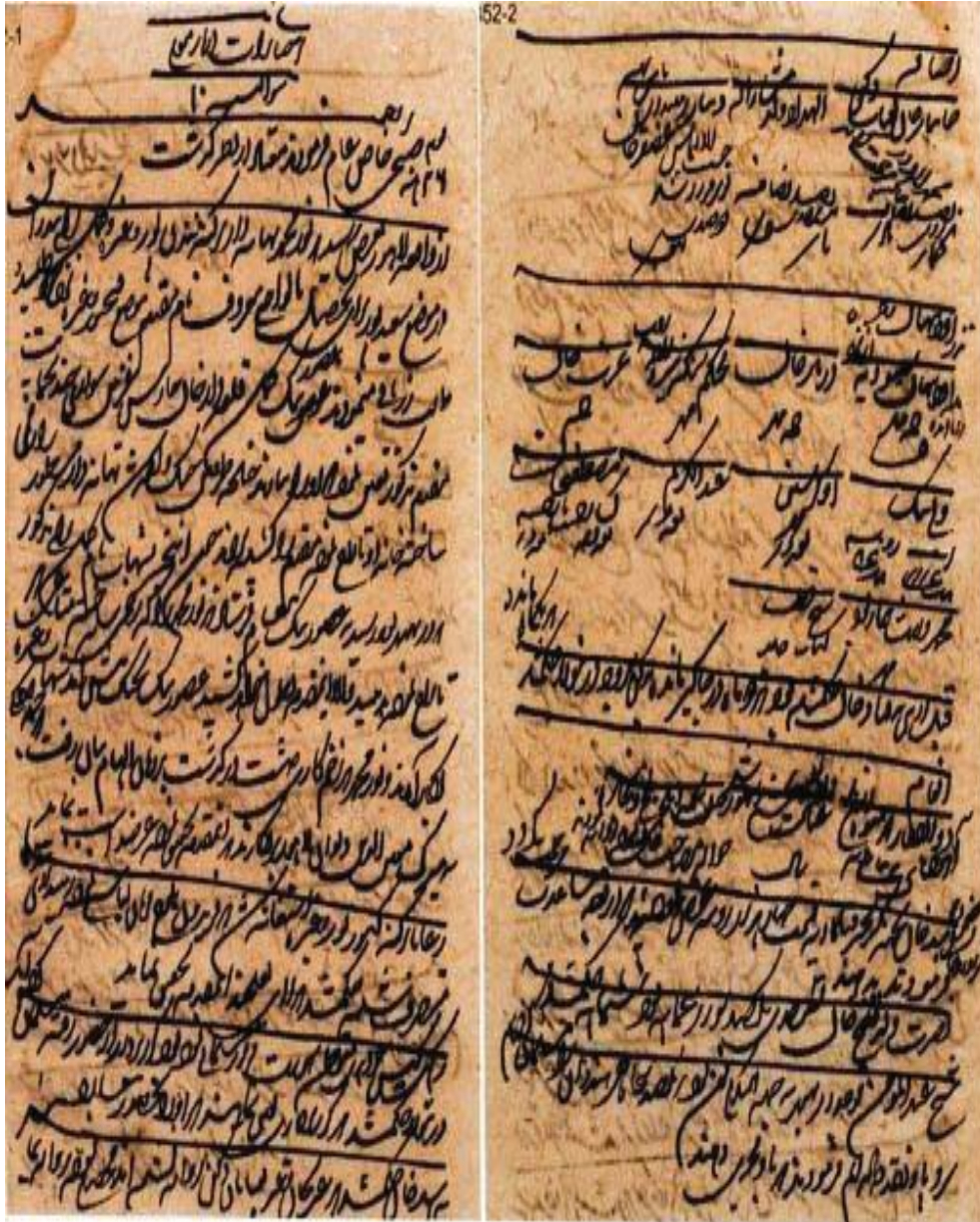


Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu‘alla, Julus 10, Shawwal 24 / April 9th 1667.

“The Emperor ordered Jumdat-ul-Mulk to write to the Mutsaddis of all the subahs (provinces) of the empire that display of fire-works (atishbazi) is being forbidden. Also, Faulad Khan was ordered to arrange for announcement in the city by the beat of a drum that no one is to indulge in atishbazi.”

The Hindus celebrate Diwali to commemorate the return of Lord Ram to Ayodhya, after fourteen years of exile and victory over Ravana, by lighting lamps and bursting crackers etc. Some time before imposing the ban on atishbazi (fireworks) Aurangzeb had written (22 November 1665) to the Subahdar of Gujarat that “In the city and parganas of Ahmedabad (or Gujarat) the Hindus, following their superstitious

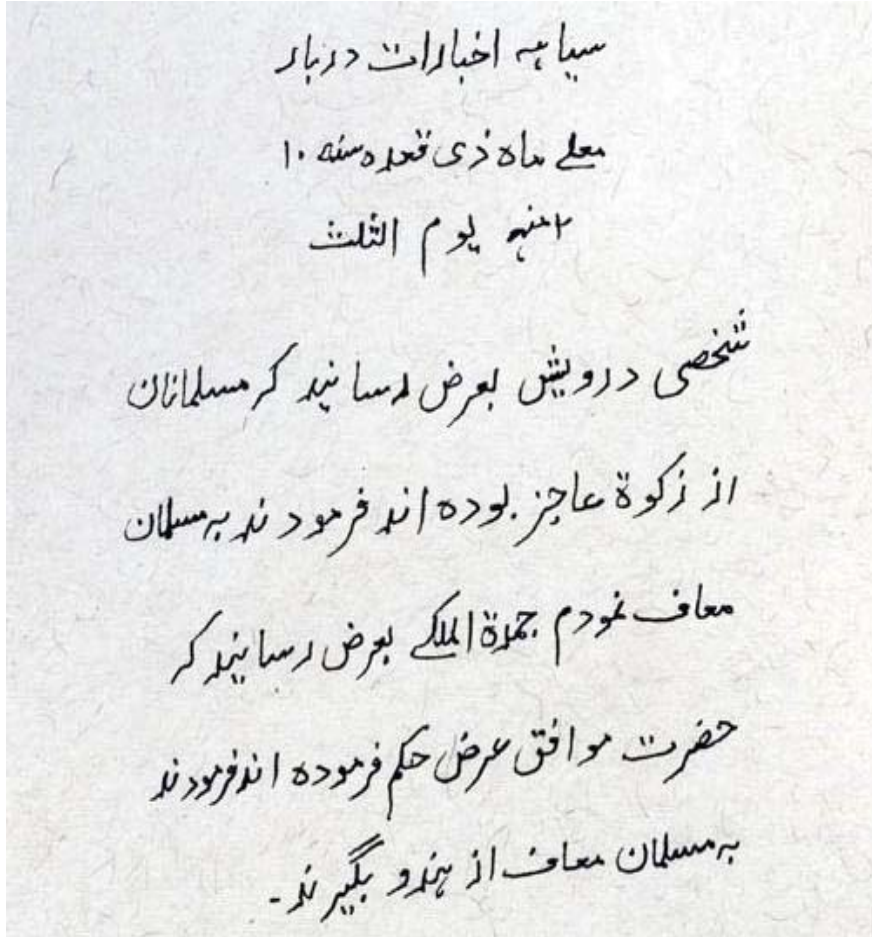
customs, light lamps in the night on Diwali... It is ordered that in bazars there should be no illumination on Diwali.” (Mirat, 276).



**Grant of saropas and cash sanctioned by Aurangzeb.** Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu‘alla, Julus (R.Yr.) 10, Shawwal 26 / 11th April 1667.

"Shaikh Abdul Momin, the Faujdar of Bithur, wrote to Jumdatul Mulk that he had converted one hundred fifty Hindus making them Musalman, and had given them saropas and cash (naqd). The Emperor said "continue giving liberally This is only one of the few recorded evidence of the State subserviently acting for the advancement of Islam during the Medieval period of India's history (1200-1790 A.D.). The process in its most invidious form was operative throughout Aurangzeb's

reign as it had been for more than three hundred years from 1200-1526 A.D. under the Delhi Sultanate, specially during the time of Sultan Firuz Tughlaq (1350-88 A.D.).



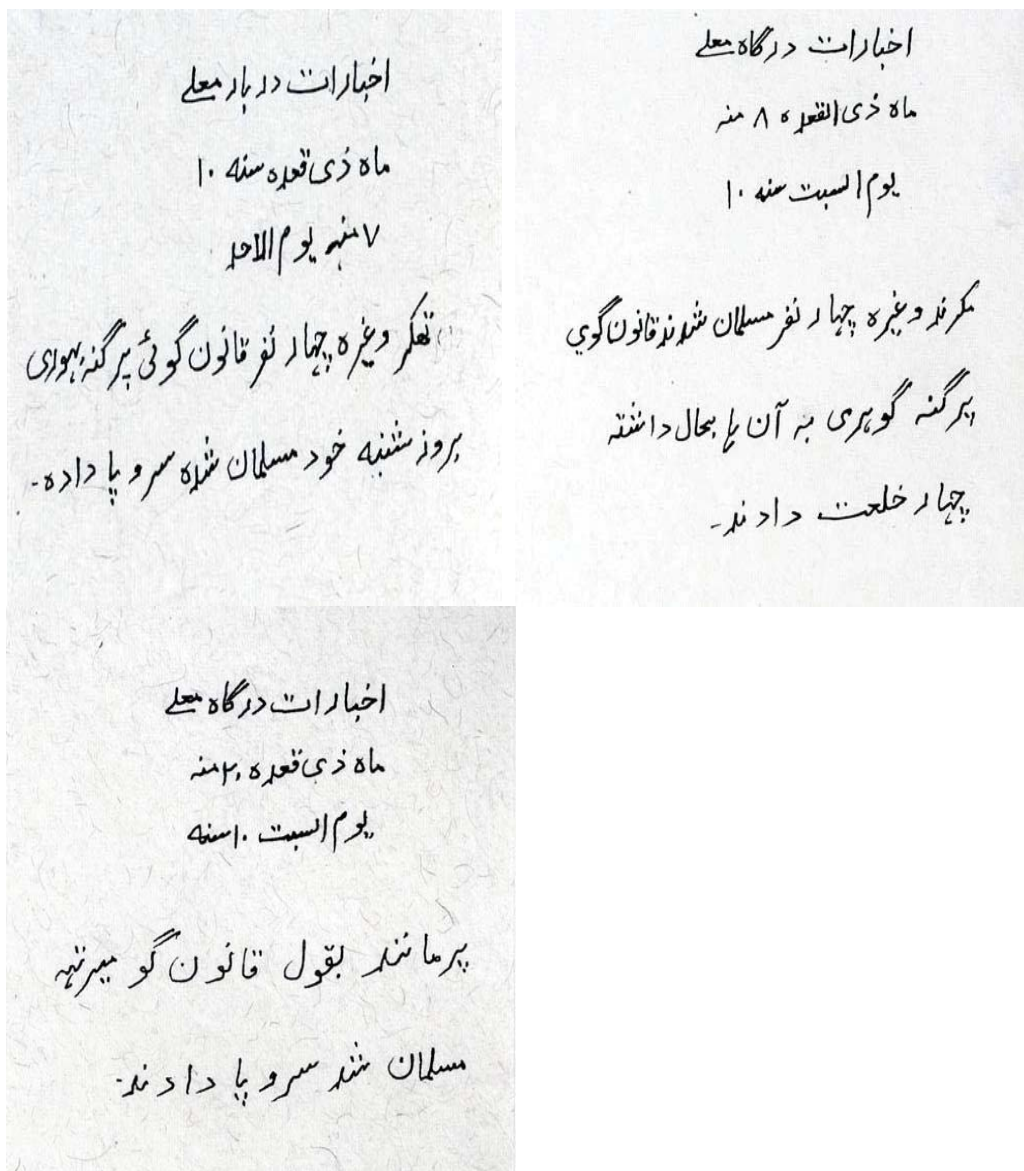
Siyaha Akhbart-i-Darbar-i-Mu'alla, Julus (R.Yr.) 10, Zilqada 2 / 16th April 1667.

“A darvesh brought to the notice of the Emperor that the Musalmans (of the country) felt dejected on account of (the burden of) Zakat and that they should be exempted from paying it. Jumdat-ul Mulk now sought the Emperor's orders regarding the matter. The Emperor (Aurangzeb) ordered that the Musalmans were to be exempted from paying it, but it should be charged from the Hindus.” The word Zakat<sup>2</sup> has been used for custom duty charged on all commodities brought for sale is right in saying that it must not be confounded with the Zakat or tithes which all Muslims had to pay as per the Quranic injunction and was meant to be spent on the Musalmans alone. When the Muslims were found to be misusing the concession, they were made to pay at half the rate of what was charged from the Hindu traders. There are a large number of Akhbarat (Aurangzeb's Court Bulletins) which mention that either Qanungoi was restored on becoming Musalman, or that a person or persons were appointed Qanungos on accepting Islam, or that they agreed to become Musalman, obviously under pressure or as inducement.

<sup>2</sup> J.N. Sarkar (Aurangzeb, Vol.III, p.181)



A typical entry in the Akhbarat, such as of R.Yr. 10, Zilqada / April 22, 1667, reads “Makrand etc., in all four persons, became Musalman. The Qanungoi of Parganah Khohri was restored to them. Four Khil’ats were conferred upon them.” Sir Jadunath Sarkar is right in saying that “Qanungship on becoming a Muslim”, had become a proverb. As Qanungo had intimate knowledge of the customs and tenures of the land, he could serve as the best agent for protecting the interests of the Musalmans and in extending influence of Islam in the rural areas. The sketch above shows four Qanungos being restored their Qanungo on becoming Musalman.



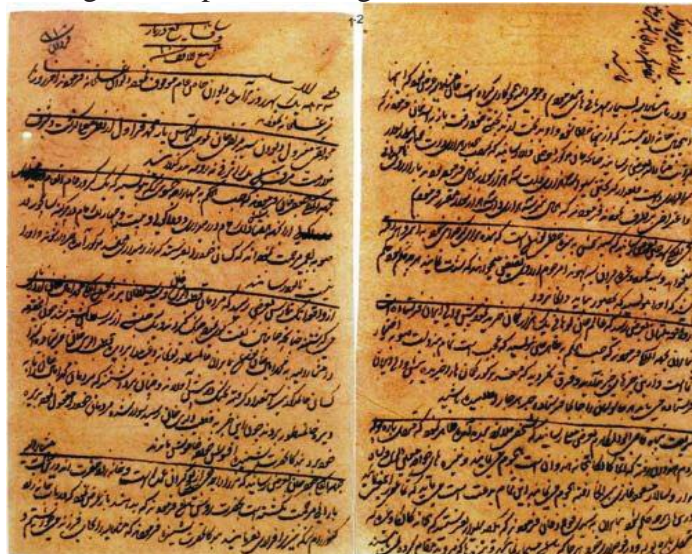
Of the three Akhbarat of April 21st, April 22nd and May 4th 1667, the first mentions that Thakkar etc, four Qanungos of parganah Bhure, became Musalman and were awarded dresses of honour; the second says that the office of Qanungo was restored to four persons (Makrand etc.) on becoming Musalmans; the third records that Parmanand, Qanungo of Meerut, became a Musalman ‘as promised by him’.



Musalmans to replace Hindu officials as cure for ineffectiveness of prayers. Siyaha Waqai Darbar, Julus (R.Yr.) 10, Muharram 18 / 1st July 1667.

*"The Emperor said to Shaikh Nizam that his prayers were not having any effect. What could be the reason for this ? The Shaikh said, 'The reason is that a large number of Hindus are serving as ahlikhidmat (officials and officers) and as musahibs (courtiers) and they are ever (seen) in the Royal presence, and, as a result, the prayers do not have any effect'. The Emperor ordered that it is necessary that the Musalmans be appointed to serve in place of the Hindus."*

The object of the Emperor's prayers or the nature of the desired result is not mentioned, but it appears that it was the elevation and dominance of Islam, progress of its mission through means, such as jihad, which are very differently regarded by people of other faiths, and the welfare of the Musalmans in particular. The instant impact of the Shaikh's analysis of the problem and implied advice to Aurangzeb is also indicative of the high degree of influence wielded by this religious class during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb.



Siyah Waqa'i-Darbar, Regnal Year 10, Rabi I, 23 / 3 September 1667.

*“The asylum of Shariat (Shariat Panah) Qazi Abul Mukaram has sent this arzi to the sublime Court: a man known to him told him that the Hindus gather in large numbers at Kalka Temple near Barahapule (near Delhi); a large crowd of the Hindus is seen here. Likewise, large crowds are seen at (the mazars) of Khwaja Muinuddin, Shah Madar and Salar Masud Ghazi. This amounts to bid‘at (heresy) and this matter deserves consideration. Whatever orders are required should be issued.*

*Saiyid Faulad Khan was thereupon ordered (by the Emperor) to send one hundred beldars to demolish the Kalka Temple and other structures in its neighbourhood which were in the Faujdari of the Khan himself; these men were to reach there post haste, and finish the work without a halt.*

Kalkaji’s Temple which stands today was rebuilt soon after Aurangzeb’s death (1707 A.D.) on the remains of the old Temple dedicated to Goddess Kali. The two Akhbarat dated R.Yr. 10, Rabi I, 23 and Rabi II, 3 (Sept.3 and Sept. 12, 1667) provide details regarding the demolition of the Temple on Aurangzeb’s orders. Since 1764, the Temple has been renovated and altered several times but the main 18th century structure more or less remains the same. The site is very old dating back to Emperor Asoka’s time (3rd century B.C.). There is mention of Kalkaji in the Maratha records of 1738. People flock to the Temple in large numbers, especially during Navratras.



Siyah Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mu‘alla, Julus 10, Rabi II, 3 / 12 September 1667.

*“Saiyad Faulad Khan has reported that in compliance with the orders, beldars were sent to demolish the Kalka Temple which task they have done. During the course of*



*the demolition, a Brahmin drew out a sword, killed a bystander and then turned back and attacked the Saiyad also, inflicting three wounds. The Saiyid managed to catch hold of the Brahmin.”*

There are only a few recorded instances of armed opposition by outraged Hindus, such as at Goner (near Jaipur), Ujjain, Udaipur and Khandela, but there must have been many more such instances of angry outbursts and resistance against Muslim vandalism which do not find mention in the official papers of Emperor Aurangzeb. Most of the Hindus took the destruction of these Temples philosophically considering these as acts of ignorance and folly for a vain purpose. They regarded that it was beyond the understanding or intelligence of the Musalmans to comprehend the principle behind the idol worship or the fundamental oneness of saguna and nirguna worship. The Hindus believed that the Gods and Goddesses leave for their abode before the hatchet or the hammer of the vile “asuras” so much as even touched the idols. The idea has been well described in Kanhadade Prabandha (wr. 1456 A.D.) when giving an account of the destruction of the Somnath Temple by Sultan Alauddin’s troops in 1299.