

Akbar the Great

In Three Volumes



VOLUME II



Evolution of Administration

1556-1605 A.D.

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

1. The First two Nawabs of Awadh (1708-1754), 2nd Ed.
2. Shuja-ud-Daulah, Vol. I (1754-64), 2nd Ed.
3. Shuja-ud-Daulah, Vol. II (1765-1775), 2nd Ed., in the press.
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14. Modern India, Part I upto 1858.
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AKBAR THE GREAT

Vol. II

Evolution of Administration, 1556–1605 A.D.

ASHIRBADI LAL SRIVASTAVA

M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt. (LUCK.), D.Litt. (AGRA)

Emeritus Professor of History, Agra College, Agra

*Formerly, Professor and Head of the Department of History
Punjab University, Lahore*

SECOND REVISED EDITION

Dedicated

to

**the sacred memory of
my father**

DIWAN RAM DAYAL

**who was fond of the story of Akbar's life
and**

**who first gave me an idea of that ruler's
greatness and popularity**

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of this volume went out of print within six years of its publication. In preparing the second edition for the press I have carefully revised the text and tried to eliminate the slips and mistakes of the first edition. I have also taken into consideration the critical (and highly appreciative) review by Mr. P. Hardy in the *J. R. A. S.*, Part I, 1971, an off-print of which I received two months back. I am beholden to the learned scholar for a frank expression of his views.

The main points raised by Mr. Hardy are : (1) the role of zamindars has been ignored ; (2) due consideration to the Muslim tradition in Akbar's ideas and activities has not been given ; (3) the author "exaggerates the extent to which the *ulama* influenced the political conduct of the sultans of Delhi, because he will accept the rhetoric of Indian Muslim historians as literally true" ; (4) he has not cited evidence for his contention (p. 305) that Hindus paid double the revenue paid by Musalmans ; (5) he has ignored the view that *Jizia* in the sultanate period was not as a rule levied as a separate discriminatory poll-tax distinct from land revenue ; (6) Muslim rulers outside India did assume the title of *Zill-allah* ; (7) the author has not mentioned the expectation of *Mahdi* in Akbar's time.

It will not be amiss, if I were to point out that I had not only cited evidence but even discussed the discriminatory character of the revenue policy of the sultans of Delhi who charged double the land revenue from Hindus that Muslims were required to pay (vide Chapter VIII, pp. 165-168 of the first edition). It was not necessary to repeat the reference at every place the fact was mentioned. The expectation of the appearance of *mahdi* and Akbar's attitude towards the problem has been discussed in Chapter V, pp. 111-113 of Vol. III of this work, published in November, 1972. In volume I a detailed account of the Islamic background of Akbar's ideas and activities and how he gradually rose above the Islamic tradition was given and it was considered unnecessary to repeat the same in the second volume. Mr. Hardy

maintains that the *ulama* did not influence the political conduct of the sultans of Delhi to the extent that I have assumed. This is what modern Indian Muslim scholars, particularly those of Aligarh school, have been trying to make us believe. My life-long study of the Persian Chronicles and the administrative institutions of the period, to say nothing of the Hagiological literature of that age, lead me definitely to the conclusion that being influenced by religious divines most of the sultans did make a genuine attempt to establish an Islamic administration in India. Whether the fiscal and political questions were left to the discretion of Muslim rulers outside India is another matter. In India, Islam was very uncompromising, and Muslim sultans and *ulama* looked upon idolatrous Hinduism as their *greatest enemy*, worked unitedly against the *Kafirs* (Hindus) and almost invariably assumed a reactionary role. It is against the canon of historical evidence to treat the accounts of the medieval chroniclers as mere rhetoric when these are substantially confirmed from other sources. As regards the title of *Zill-allah*, it might have been assumed by a few sultans in outer Muslim countries, but in India it was Qutb-ud-din Mubarak Khalji who first of all took that title for himself. With regard to the theory "that the *jizia* in the sultanate period was not as a rule levied as a separate discriminatory poll-tax distinct from land revenue, there is no unimpeachable contemporary evidence to support it. It might have been lumped with land revenue in emergencies under a weak sultan. Although I have already given an account of 'zamindars' in Chapter II, pp. 30-47 of volume III of this work, I am adding a paragraph in this edition of volume II in acceptance of the suggestion of Mr. Hardy.

I am grateful to Professor Hardy for his generous remark that he found my "two-volume work on Akbar, taking the rough with the smooth, the most attractive and comprehensive general treatment of an inexhaustible subject, now in the market."

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The Second Volume of *Akbar the Great* seeks to describe the administration of the reign (1556-1605 A.D.) in all its branches. The plan followed is to go back for the origins of political, fiscal, military, administrative and cultural institutions to ancient India, to trace briefly their evolution to the accession of Akbar and then describe his contribution in each case. This method has been followed in order not only to present a connected, though brief, account of the administrative history of Northern India upto the opening years of the seventeenth century, but also to enable the reader to see for himself the distinct achievements of the 'Great Mughul' in the various fields of administrative activity. Moreover, it indicates the process of fusion of the indigenous and the foreign institutions and usages that the Turks had brought with them. No doubt, there was for sometime confusion and setback in the progress of administration owing to a clash between the indigenous and foreign systems but no complete breakdown of the machinery of government, as the new rulers wisely adopted most of the old institutions whose forms had of course to undergo a change during the period of transition. This work will show that no medieval Indian ruler, not even Ala-ud-din Khalji or Muhammad bin Tughlaq, broke entirely new ground in administrative and revenue matters, and all of them, including Sher Shah and Akbar were indebted to their Indian predecessors in the ancient and the early medieval age as much as, if not more than, to their ancestors in Central Asia. There has of late been a controversy regarding the extent to which Akbar was indebted to Sher Shah. A perusal of the present book will convince the critical reader that Akbar's policy and administration, even in land revenue matters in which the Afghan monarch was an expert, registered a great improvement on those of Sher Shah. The work also draws attention to Akbar's restless inquisitiveness and ceaseless activity in all matters, and his keen desire to improve every branch of administration so as to leave it in a better shape and working order than he had found it on his accession.

The volume reveals Akbar's conscious, willing and successful experiment in administering a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural community for the common good of all. Such a thing was not altogether unknown to ancient Indian rulers, but in its pursuit Akbar had to encounter many more complex problems than any former Hindu statesman had to face. And it was certainly new and repugnant to the world of Islam, and Akbar's predecessors since the establishment of the sultanate of Delhi had disdained making any attempt to follow, in the footsteps of the ancient Hindu rulers in this respect. They had pinned their faith on the Islamic ideal that believed that political stability was impossible without religious uniformity. Akbar's experiment demanded much more than the age-long Hindu experience of religious tolerance and equality ; it was reinforced by his own faith in social and economic justice and respect for human personality. His experiment gave the lie to the deep-rooted Islamic belief, and the administrative edifice that he built up with care, forethought and sympathy proved to be enduring. It stood the shock of many a crisis, many a bloody war of succession and numerous internal rebellions and foreign invasions. The titular Mughul emperor, even when he had ceased to be the head of government, continued to be cherished as the symbol of India's unity till the British deported the last scion of Akbar's dynasty to Rangoon in 1858.

The subject is of something more than academic interest. Though they began gradually to lose their vitality sometime after the controlling hand of their gifted author was removed, Akbar's institutions remained in force during the reigns of his successors for about 200 years. And if there was any departure from them, it was in the direction of deterioration on account of the incompetence of the later Mughul rulers. Some of these institutions are the basis of the Indian administration of today.

In writing this volume, the author had to study a good deal of original literature on administration in ancient India and during the period of the Delhi sultanate (1206-1526), besides all available contemporary works in Persian and other languages on the age of Akbar. He cannot, however, lay claim to originality as far as his account of the ancient Indian administration is concerned. But his observations regarding the age of

the Delhi sultanate as well as his description of the administration of Akbar, based as they are on a critical study of all available contemporary sources, are his own. It is a pity that the contemporary literature though vast and varied in its range and scholarship, has not yielded adequate material for writing a critical treatise on the working of Akbar's administration. Nevertheless, the present volume provides, it is hoped, a clear picture of his administration in theory and practice.

The author is conscious of the imperfections of the book, which are due partly to the paucity of the kind of data that one needs in writing a work on institutions, and partly on account of his having had to repeat certain facts here and there. He was, however, forced to this necessity on account of the relevance of those facts to the subject-matter of the chapters concerned, and of the peculiar nature of Islamic polity in which religious and mundane affairs are inextricably blended.

The author is beholden to the authorities of the Asiatic Society Library, Calcutta, the Oriental Khuda Bakhsh Library, Bankipur, Patna and the National Library, Calcutta (all the three of which he had to visit more than once and for long periods during the last four years), as well as to those of his own college and university libraries, Agra, for various facilities accorded to him. He is grateful to the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, for a grant to him of an honorarium meant for retired university teachers for a period of five years, which made possible the pursuit and completion of this work without financial worry. He is thankful to Sri S. N. Mudgal for his patient and critical reading of the proofs, to his son Dr. Dharma Bhanu for preparing the descriptive index, and to his publishers, Messrs. Shiva Lal Agarwala & Co., Agra for the pains they have taken in the printing and get-up of the book.

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March 1, 1967

A. L. Srivastava

ABBREVIATIONS

1. *Abdul Aziz*—The Mansabdari System and the Mughal Army.
2. *Abdul Baqi*—Maasir-i-Rahimi.
3. *Abdullah*—Tarikh-i-Daudi.
4. *Abu Ali*—Siyasat Nama.
5. *Abu Talib*—Malfusat-i-Timuri.
6. *Abu Yusuf*—Kitab-al-Kharaj.
7. *Adab*—Adab-i-Saltanat wa Wizarat.
8. *Afif*—Tarikh-i-Firozshahi by Shams-Siraj Afif.
9. *Aghnides*—Muhammadan Theories of Finance, etc., by N.P. Aghnides.
10. *Ahmad*—Administration of Justice in Medieval India, by Muhammad Bashir Ahmad.
11. *Ain*—Ain-i-Akbari.
12. *Ain-ul-Mulk*—Inshai Mahru by Ain-ul-Mulk.
13. *A.N.*—Akbar Nama.
14. *Ali*—Amir Ali's 'A Short History of the Saracens'.
15. *Al-Mawardi*—Ahkam al-Sultaniya.
16. *ASAI*—Agrarian System in Ancient India.
17. *ASMI*—Agrarian System of Mughal India.
18. *Aziz Ahmad*—Studies in Islamic Culture in Indian Environment.
19. *B.N.*—Babar Nama or Tuzuk-i-Babari.
20. *Badayuni*—Abdul Qadir Badayuni.
21. *Barani*—Tarikh-i-Firozshahi, by Zia-ud-din Barani.
22. *Barbosa*—The Book of Duarte Barbosa, Eng. tr., M.L., Dames, 2 vols.
23. *Bayazid*—Tarikh-i-Humayun wa Akbar, by Bayazid Bayat.
24. *Br. M. Ms.*—British Museum Manuscript.
25. *C.H.I.*—Cambridge History of India.
26. *Commentarius*—Mongolicea, Legationis Commentarius of F. Monserrate.
27. *Dabistan*—Dabistan-i-Mazahib, by Muhsin Fani.
28. *Daudi*—Tarikh-i-Daudi, by Abdullah.

29. *D.A.*—Dastur-Albab fi ilmil-hisab.
30. *De Laet*—De Imperio Magni Mogolis, Sive India Vera, Eng. tr., F. Hoyland.
31. *Du Jarric*—Histoire, etc., Eng. tr., C. H. Payne.
32. *Ed.*—Edited by.
33. *E. and D.*—Elliot and Dowson's History of India as told by its own Historians.
34. *Eng. tr.*—English translation.
35. *Fakhr-i-Muddabir*—Adab-al-Muluk.
36. *Fakhr-ud-din*—Tarikh-i-Fakhr-ud-din Mubarak Shah.
37. *Fazl*—Suluk-al-Muluk, by Fazal ibn Ruzbihan Isfahani.
38. *Firishta*—Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi alias Tarikh-i-Firishta.
39. *Foster*—Early Travels in India, ed., Sir William Foster.
40. *Futuhāt*—Futuhāt-i-Firozshahi of Firoz Tughlaq.
41. *Ghoshal*—Contribution to the History of Hindu Revenue System.
42. —The Agrarian System in Ancient India.
43. *Gulbadan*—Humayun Nama, by Gulbadan Banu Begum.
44. *Haig*—Sir Wolseley Haig.
45. *Hidaya*—Eng. tr. of Hidaya, by Charles Hamilton & S. G. Grady.
46. *Hitti*—History of the Arabs, by Philip K. Hitti.
47. *Hodivala*—Historical Studies in Mughal Numismatics.
48. *Hodivala*—Studies in Indo-Muslim History.
49. *Horn Paul*—Des Heer-und Kriegsrwesen des Gross-Moghuls.
50. *Husain*—Administration of Justice during the Muslim Rule in India, by Wahed Husain.
51. *Ibn Hasan*—The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire.
52. *Ibn Khaldun*—Muzaddima Tarikh.
53. *Inshai*—Inshai Abul Fazl.
54. *Inshai*—Inshai Mahru.
55. *Irfan Habib*—The Agrarian System of Mughal India.
56. *Irvine*—Army of the Indian Moghuls.
57. *J.A.S.B.*—Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
58. *J.I.H.*—Journal of Indian History.
59. *J. R. A. S.*—Journal of Royal Asiatic Society.
60. *Kautilya*—Kautilya's Arthashastra.
61. *Khwandamir*—Humayun Nama.
62. *Lane Poole*—British Museum Catalogue of Moghul Coins.

63. *Macdonald*—Development of Muslim Theology, etc., by D.B. Macdonald.
64. *Maktubat*—Maktubat-i-Abul Fazl.
65. *Manrique*—Travels of Manrique, ed., Luard and Hosten, Vol. II.
66. *Minhaj*—Tabqat-i-Nasiri of Minhaj-al-Siraj.
67. *Mirat*—Mirat-i-Ahmadi of Muhammad Ali Khan.
68. *M.A.Q.*—Muhammad Arif Qandhari's Tarikh-i-Akbar Shahi.
69. *M.R.*—Maasir-i-Rahimi.
70. *M.T.*—Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh of Abdul Qadir Badayuni.
71. *M. U.*—Maasir-ul-Umra.
72. *Mushtaqi*—Waqayat-i-Mushtaqi.
73. *Per. T.*—Persian Text.
74. *P.I.H.C.*—Proceedings of Indian History Congress.
75. *Qureshi*—Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi.
76. *Rodgers*—Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum.
77. *Rodgers*—Copper Coins of Akbar.
78. *T. A.*—Tabqat-i-Akbari.
79. *T. Alamgir Sani*—Tarikh-i-Alamgir Sani.
80. *Thomas*—The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi.
81. *Tuzuk*—Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.
82. *T. J.*—Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.
83. *Vambrey*—History of Bukhara, A. Vambrey.
84. *Whitehead*—Catalogue of Coins of the Mughal Emperors in the Punjab Museum.
85. *Wright*—Catalogue of the Indian Museum Coins.
86. *Wright*—The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi.

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