

Aurangzeb's Deccan Policy: An Approach of his Misguided Mind or Just Badly Timed?

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ABSTRACT

Oftentimes the last great Mughal emperor is portrayed as a vicious character and a number of his policies are surveyed with a cynical outlook. They are usually stamped as ill-founded and redundant. To most of us, Deccan policy is no exception. It is, for the most part, held that the policy was completely irrelevant in the contemporary socio-political contexts and it indeed, in due time, turned out to be an ineffectual and fragile personal proclivity of Aurangzeb's abrupt vision and deceptive mind. Besides, He was/is characterized as a religious fanatic whose narrow sectarian outlook steered him into Deccan politics and this, in turn, intensified the crisis and fuelled his ultimate downfall. But was the policy truly groundless in the truest sense of the term or a well planned and necessary measure with all its concomitant faults that eventually failed to meet its ultimate objective due to the poor timing and other contemporary woes? This seeks analysis and the paper tries to present an answer.

Aurangzeb, the last emperor of the great Mughals is inarguably one of the most controversial figures in the context of his actions and a great deal of his character is still cloaked in perplexities. We often tend to present a narrow and bleak angle of the motives behind his actions. He was certainly an emperor with many technical faults who often implemented harsh measures to meet his agendas. But that doesn't necessarily prove that he was an emperor of blunder and a sightless and vicious agent of the evil who was hell-bent on converting India into an Islamic kingdom. He is viewed as the most brutal and merciless among his four brothers who usurped the throne from the 'rightful claim' of a well mannered Dara Shikoh. However, it wasn't guaranteed that Dara would have been a great ruler in case he succeeded Shah Jahan. In fact, Audrey Truschke believes that Dara could have been equally cruel just like Aurangzeb.¹ I believe, he was somehow made into a scapegoat by contemporary society and regressed to the status of a fanatic. But the dealing of several Historians with Aurangzeb is grossly inappropriate because their views tend to reflect their thoughts, preconceptions, and biases. Furthermore, past information is processed through human minds and subject to the socio-political and cultural contexts of that time. According to E. H. Carr, "History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. The facts are available to the historians in documents, inscriptions, and so on like fish in the fishmonger's slab. The historians collect them, take them home, cook, and serve them in whatever style appeals to them"². The final meal then depends not only on the fish available but also prompts the chef to select the way he wants to cook it. Therefore a true analytical study of the nature of Aurangzeb's policies, free from prejudices, fallacies, and twisted expositions is an impending task for historical objectivity which itself is a much-desired aim in historical studies.

¹"Dara Shikoh would have been as cruel as Aurangzeb: Audrey Truschke". *Business Standard*. January 27th, 2019. Retrieved 5th March 2019. https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/dara-shikoh-would-have-been-as-cruel-as-aurangzeb-historian-audrey-truschke-119012700256_1.html

² Carr, E. H. (1961). *What is History?* New York. p.1-97 (PDF version)

His Deccan policy remains a well-debated topic and is frequently found in general history books of schools and colleges, ascribing the whole policy as a blunder of his misguided actions. It admittedly turned out to be a blunder that strained the royal exchequer, shifted the attention from North to South, isolated the royal capital, and gradually brought the vast and 'prestigious' Mughal Empire to the brink of downfall. As historian Jadunath Sarkar put it, the Deccan ulcer that completely decimated his image somewhat reminds us of the Spanish ulcer of Napoleon Bonaparte.³ But on all accounts, his Deccan campaign was certainly not groundless. He envisaged a well-thought-out plan that, in due time, turned out to be a debacle as a result of some unprecedented acts that Aurangzeb himself could not assume and prevent. These acts, coupled with an immediate rise of the Marathas from some fragmented local groups to a regional power, took their own course. Besides, Aurangzeb's miscalculated approach towards Rajputs and Jats aggravated the situation and embroiled him in additional difficulties. The spirited and impregnable resistance from two Shia states, Bijapur and Golconda also tested his patience and the repeated failures to restrict the 'enemies from all sides' rubbed salt into the wounds and this eventually sealed his fate.

But why am I calling it a requisite step in the contemporary political context of the age if the policy was predestined to be a failure? Was it inevitable to pursue a long-standing conflict with the Shahi dynasties and seize both Bijapur and Golconda? Was his decision to engage in a bitter feud with Shivaji a necessity of time? Or the religious bigotry (the Shia- Sunni conflict and his so-called Hindu antipathy) compelled him to take such steps? Well, many believe that the religious angle should not be cast aside as he was a devout Muslim and someone whom S. R. Sharma called a puritan. Sharma in his book, "The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors", basically reiterated Jadunath Sarkar's stance of Aurangzeb being a religious fanatic. However "Sarkar's

³ Sarkar, J. (1919). *Studies in Mughal India*. M. C. Sarkar & Sons, Calcutta, W. Heffer & Sons, Cambridge.

contention regarding the Islamic church-state and that the true objectives of Aurangzeb were to establish such a state in India is no longer taken seriously in academic circles", as opined by Satish Chandra.⁴ Chandra also mentioned that "a careful study of Sarkar's writings shows that his assessment of Aurangzeb's religious policy was largely based on the study of the first half of Aurangzeb's reign which was climaxed by the re-imposition of Jizyah and his attempt to annex Marwar and subdued Mewar".⁵ Thus the religious bigotry may not be a plausible factor that exacerbated the political condition in Deccan and elevated things to a new level. The powerful presence of two independent states within the realm of Mughal territories turned out to be an increasing headache. It posed a considerable threat to Mughal sovereignty and Aurangzeb was abortive in his attempt to curb their influence as the viceroy during the time of Shah Jahan. The then viceroy was frightened of their increasing power and believed that he would gradually be incapacitated without the complete annihilation of these two hostile territories. (Aurangzeb was eventually on the verge of annexing them after a strenuous struggle. But the war of succession broke out within the Mughal Empire; hence his main goal as the viceroy of Deccan remained unrealized). At times, it is mindlessly stated that his long-drawn contention in Deccan as the viceroy paved the way for numerous invasions in that region out of his unrealistic zeal. However, it was not certainly a fanatical avidity that obliged him to invade Deccan and station his army for nearly twenty-five years. (As a matter of fact, on consolidating his position as the emperor, he directed his attention towards North India and appointed different nobles in Deccan just like his predecessors. Had it been out of his zeal, would he not be present in Deccan in person from the initial days of his reign?). Despite the religious influences, his policies were chiefly driven by political factors as Aurangzeb was a hardcore pragmatist. Nonetheless, he wasn't the only Mughal emperor who initiated the Deccan campaign. In fact, the policy took the centre stage of attention for several Mughal emperors, mainly beginning with Akbar. Mughals' strong penchant of accruing Deccan was guided by several factors such as the strategic importance, the vast resources of the region, and the administrative and economic necessities of the Mughal Empire as well. Even Babur and Humayun were aware of these facts. But Babur had little time to spare in regard to Deccan but still, his battle and the subsequent conquest of Chanderi (1528) brought him in close contact with the northern borders of Malwa. Humayun was also not able to spend much time due to his preoccupation in Bengal, Bihar, and Gujarat. But the Mughal rulers never adopted the policy of isolation for Deccan. It was Akbar who made the real efforts to expand the Mughal sovereignty (or at least suzerainty) in Deccan. By the time he took charges, the political situation in Deccan changed drastically. During the time of early Mughal rulers like Babur and Humayun, the Vijayanagar Empire was a renowned force but it was completely obliterated in the battle of Talikota (1565) and five different kingdoms (Berar, Bidar, Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda) that were already in vogue, owing to the disintegration of Bahmani Sultanate, now rose in prominence.

Akbar's invasion and hard-fought conquest of Khandesh was a testament to his Deccan interest. He was partly successful in constraining Ahmednagar's influence but failed to take any decisive action against Bijapur and Golconda. Jahangir followed the footsteps of his father and continued to press his campaigns against Ahmednagar, Bijapur, and Golconda. He too achieved some sporadic success to check the growth of Ahmednagar but the tactful handling and the sagacious policies of Malik Ambar prevented him from a full annexation. Bijapur and Golconda agreed to pay tribute but it was never meant to be a permanent surrender and an absolute acquiescence under Mughal dominance. It was, during the time of Shah Jahan that Ahmednagar finally came to terms and accepted complete Mughal sovereignty. Howbeit, the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda that was in the offing under Aurangzeb's viceroyalty now looked a far-fetched dream. But how these drowsy facts are necessary to draw a comprehensive picture when a great deal of them is already known? This banal and overused body of information is easily available in history books and widely circulated in a larger historical spectrum. Therefore, what is the necessity of drawing them back constantly? There are two reasons for doing so. Firstly, the aforementioned information proves that the Mughals had an everlasting interest in the politics of Deccan and it wasn't abruptly initiated by Aurangzeb, hence discarding any possibility of Deccan theory being Aurangzeb's brainchild. His immense interest in Deccan did not grow out all of a sudden but was heavily influenced by the policies of his predecessors. Moreover, the emperor's interest was further strengthened when he was appointed as the viceroy of Deccan by his father Shah Jahan. Aurangzeb, in due course, learnt that the conquest of the Shahi dynasties was an extremely difficult affair and as Shah Jahan got debilitated physically; his interest in Deccan gradually petered out due to the internal brawl inside the Mughal Empire. A less interested Shah Jahan did not provide much assistance to the then viceroy Aurangzeb and he finally had to return only to get engaged in the war of succession. As Aurangzeb's aim remained unfulfilled, it was quite certain that he would try to annex these states after being the emperor and consolidating his power. Secondly, as Ahmednagar finally surrendered to the Mughals, the only stumbling blocks were Bijapur and Golconda that not only remained independent of relentless Mughal pressure but by and by grew their power with an intention to withstand future offensive. Numerous Mughal emperors were trying to belittle their influence but falling significantly short because of various political factors. Aurangzeb's presence in Deccan was the continuation of his father's policy that he was expected to carry forward as the emperor as it remained the sine qua non of Mughal policies. After being the emperor, Aurangzeb naturally got preoccupied with the affairs of Deccan. Thus, to say the least, it was neither some abrupt vision of the emperor nor an immature policy deriving from his iniquitous mind. A policy can eventually become a failure without the proper implementation or the lack of understanding about contemporary socio-political factors. But that does not mean that the particular policy is groundless or redundant. Napoleon's policy in Spain and Portugal proved to be disastrous due to the lack of proper planning. Similarly, Aurangzeb's Deccan policy was not a misguided approach but it certainly turned out to be his greatest blunder due to the contemporary political incidents

⁴ Chandra, S. (1986). Some Considerations on the Religious Policy of Aurangzeb During the Later Part of his Reign. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*. Vol.47. pp.369-381

⁵ Ibid

that Aurangzeb himself could have never imagined. Historian Jadunath Sarkar believed that the Deccan policy was the beginning of the end⁶ as the emperor was blindly driven by religious dogmatism. But the explanation of Deccan policy being Aurangzeb's personal failure due to some religious reason is not a generally accepted opinion. The policy itself is far more complicated than that.⁷ The unanticipated rise of the Marathas (as a force to be reckoned with) under the adroit leadership of Shivaji and his shrewd dealing with Bijapur sultanate as a political necessity to establish a firm identity in Deccan, heated the political air of that region. Now a third party emerged that completely altered the scenarios and made it more strenuous for the Mughal emperor to have the upper hand over his enemies. Occasionally, historians attribute his complete departure (from Delhi to Deccan) to the stern nature of his sectarian outlook that propelled the gradual decline of the Mughal Empire as North India was neglected and the relationship with Rajputs, Jats, and Sikhs was deteriorated. But the truth speaks otherwise. "It is true that Aurangzeb's absence from north encouraged the Rajputs, Jats, and Sikhs to rise in revolt against the Mughals.....but it would be difficult to say that Aurangzeb's presence during the period could have saved the empire."⁸ He was deeply engrossed with the politics of Deccan and several failed attempts increased his anxiety and restlessness. He fancied a complete dominance over his enemies and the outstanding failures of numerous generals including his maternal uncle Shaista Khan made the emperor realize that it was an extremely assiduous task to be engaged with the affairs of Deccan from Delhi and an impossible assignment to command his instructions from there. Aurangzeb comprehended that the need for his direct involvement and presence was significantly vital to run a smooth chain of command. As the emperor paid meticulous attention to the politics of northern and central parts of India for the first twenty years of his reign, he firmly consolidated his authority by eliminating most of the internal chaos and as no such serious threats were emerging from these parts, he ultimately decided to devote his full energy, concentration, and attention to Deccan. But this eventually proved to be detrimental for Aurangzeb in particular and the Mughal Empire as a whole. He wasted several precious years of his life, grew older and his grip over northern and central India went astray as several regional forces popped up and rocked the foundation of the empire to the core. The Deccan policies were exhausting the royal coffer and Aurangzeb was well acquainted with the decaying situation. But it was too late to take any remedial step to ameliorate the condition. Things had gone disarray as he failed to steer the events in the right direction and there was nothing the emperor could do apart from being a mere observer. However, J. F. Richards believed that "the crisis could have been averted if Aurangzeb wanted

to" and further claimed that "the crisis was artificially created and not due to any real scarcity of resources".⁹

However, Aurangzeb's entire Deccan chronicle isn't all about Bijapur and Golconda, rather they happened to be a mere fraction of his Himalayan adversity of achieving complete control. The emergence of the Maratha power under Shivaji traded balanced in the politics of Deccan which was a lopsided affair for the Mughals till the early 1660s. In the beginning, the Marathas were originally 'Bhumihars' and soldiers in the service of the neighbouring Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur and Ahmednagar where they studied the craft of administration and underwent their first political training. During the time of Shivaji's grandfather and father: Maloji Bhosale and Shahaji, the Marathas were the mere employees under the Bijapur sultanate and during the first half of his life; Shivaji himself rendered the service of the neighbouring Shia states. But the besiegement of numerous forts and his very famous guerrilla warfare techniques brought him into the forefront and established him as one of the chief political players in Deccan. He captured several small territories of the Bijapur sultanate and introduced the very harsh Chauth and Sardeshmukhi taxation systems. In due course, Shivaji gradually developed an image of awe and reverence among the locals and Marathas dreamt of consolidating themselves under his leadership. This eventually engaged him in a rancorous squabble against Bijapur sultanate and it, indeed, was quite feasible given the political context of that time. Meanwhile, the affairs of Deccan took a serious turn following his famous encounter with veteran Bijapur general Afzal Khan and his victory over Bijapur Sultanate in the Battle of Pratapggarh (1659). It naturally strengthened Shivaji's position and provided him with plenty of time to consolidate and establish himself as a ruler. Anyway, as Bijapur was being enervated by the incessant strikes from both the Marathas and the Mughals, Aurangzeb directed his attention towards Shivaji and started considering him as a serious threat. There began the long-lasting struggle between Aurangzeb and Shivaji in which the former lost most of his prestige and the latter was glorified to an unfathomable degree due to his so-called valour and resistance. This Aurangzeb-Shivaji animosity had given birth to myriads of diverging interpretations in the academic sphere and laymen's talks in the forms of nationalism (Jingoism to some extent), communalism, the spirit of discipline and bravery and so on in today's India. However, it wasn't a religious struggle as far as the political necessity of that age is concerned from the perspectives of both the Mughals and the Marathas. Aurangzeb was petrified of the ever-increasing Maratha power along with the sudden tinge of nationalism inside them. This particular expression of Maratha nationalism was/is interpreted in a wrong way and Aurangzeb is held accountable for being a fanatic and launching a 'Jihad' for the protection of 'holy' Islam. It is quite expectedly assumed that

⁶ Agnihotri. V. K. (2010) *Indian History*, 26th edition. Allied Publishers. p.C-28

⁷ Moosvi, S. (1982). The Mughal Empire and The Deccan - Economic Factors and Consequences. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*. Vol.43. pp.365-382

⁸ Kochhar, S. K. (1979). *Teaching of History*. Sterling Publishers Private Limited. p.364

⁹ Farooqui. S. A. (2011). *A Comprehensive History of Medieval India from Twelfth to Mid Eighteen Century*. Pearson. p.300.....The crisis could have been averted if Aurangzeb wanted to.....Aurangzeb was more interested in constantly expanding the size of the royal land of Khalsa. After the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda, there was a 23% revenue increase which was again used to finance the Deccan campaign instead of being distributed amongst the Mansabdars. An opportunity to solve the Jaigirdari crisis on the onset was thus lost and therefore historians like Richards are of the opinion that this crisis was artificially created and not due to any real scarcity of resources in the empire.

Aurangzeb, for curbing Hindu nationalism, stationed himself in Deccan for more than it was necessary and this 'wicked' malpractice against Hindus spearheaded his ultimate demise. It certainly did bring his downfall but the cause wasn't limited to the rise Maratha nationalism in any sense. It is true that he was utterly unsettled due to the sudden rise of Marathas guided by Hindu ideologies but wasn't it obvious for any ruler regardless of any specific religious orientation to be perturbed by the meteoric rise of an empire practising an opposite ideology that had the potential to pose a serious threat to his/her sovereignty? Therefore, Aurangzeb cannot be accused in these circumstances. There were practical reasons behind his policies and they undoubtedly were imperative to meet the demands of the age. But the flawed execution of plans and at times, the extremely adamant nature of Aurangzeb, acted as tremendous impediments to materialize his dreams. He had never imagined the unforeseen rise of the Marathas and it eventually forced him to be involved in a tripartite struggle in Deccan. Besides, the emperor was already hassled by the repeated ill-fated attempts to conquer Bijapur and Golconda and thus entangled himself in an intricate situation in that process. Though the two Shia states were not in a position to cope with the Mughal forces, Aurangzeb, however, was unable to take them down completely. In the meantime, the rise of the Marathas strained the resources and tested his patience. He now became frustrated and wanted to go for an all-out war against the Marathas. If the emperor had tactfully handled Shivaji without waging war against him, many believe that it would have saved the Mughal exchequer from crashing down, thus preventing the downfall of the empire. But waging war was the only option as all other means were either exhausted or became completely irrelevant in the political context of Deccan at that time. Shivaji's growing ambition and spirited struggle against Mughals by consolidating the opposition forces and Aurangzeb's inflexible nature paved the way for a perpetual hostility. Aurangzeb deputed his maternal uncle Shaista Khan with the hope to overcome this 'fleeting' problem (or so he thought). While Mughal forces initially had the upper hand, Shivaji's sudden guerrilla attack on the Mughal camp, scattered the unprepared army and completely shattered their spirit. This led to the retreat of Khan's forces which was nothing short of a defeat for the mighty Mughals. This incident lowered Aurangzeb's prestige significantly and alarmed him regarding the growing Maratha authority in Deccan. He again dispatched Jai Singh I and Diler Khan, who, this time defeated Shivaji and forced him to come to terms with Aurangzeb. (Treaty of Purandar was signed: 1665). The treaty proved to be a success for Aurangzeb as he dictated most of the terms. But he was also becoming quite uneasy due to Shivaji's growing ambition and wanted to keep a vigil on him by putting him under his direct control. Shivaji was called to attend the Mughal court in Agra. He was later put under house arrest after several court incidents but fled in a daring attempt. However, with the interference of Mughal Sardar Jaswant Singh, peace was restored between Shivaji and Aurangzeb for a short period.

All these aforesaid incidents did not favour Aurangzeb as much as they did in the case of Shivaji. Aurangzeb was never really able to control Shivaji who later performed his coronation and titled himself with 'Chhatrapati' (1674) against the dismay of the Mughal 'Badshah'. The long-lasting battle in

Deccan tested his energy, devotion, wealth, and time. His policies towards Shivaji and his successors were proved to be extremely inefficient. The emperor had to be engaged with Shivaji in a direct confrontation because the latter happened to be a highly aspirant person and wasn't content to be a mere Mansabdar under the Mughals. Shivaji was aspiring to fabricate his own empire: The Maratha Empire. He was truly a menace to Aurangzeb's prestige and sovereignty. Thus, the war was the only option in that political scenario. Though Aurangzeb's Hindu antipathy is subject to wide debates and contestations, it did not play the decisive role behind his perennial struggle with Shivaji. Religion was, at times, just used as a catalyst for the necessity of the time. I believe it wasn't the rise of a Hindu empire within a Muslim empire that caused the tension. It was essentially the rise of a new empire within an old one that served the identity crisis for the latter and religion was a mere isotope. Therefore, the views expressed by S. R. Sharma or Lane-Poole that Aurangzeb being a Puritan, prosecuted the Hindus, cannot be taken into account as far as the Deccan policy is concerned.¹⁰

Aurangzeb's engagement in Deccan was twofold. In our popular perception, the first chapter is related to a Shia-Sunni struggle and the second chapter is connected with a Hindu-Muslim one. This religious perception is overused and overplayed. However, a large number of Historians quite rationally presented different political motives and absolved Aurangzeb from religious misconceptions. Aurangzeb initially signed treaties with Bijapur and Golconda after an arduous struggle that had been in existence since time immemorial and then directed his attention towards Shivaji as the emperor regarded him as a more formidable force than these two aforementioned sultanates. But, as Aurangzeb's endeavours were fruitless against Shivaji and his successors (after 1680 and during the time of Sambhaji, Rajaram Bhosle I and to some extent under Tarabai's leadership); he shifted his attention back to Bijapur and Golconda, broke the treaties and launched offensive to annex them in a desperate attempt. Marathas from the last decade of the 17th century became a parallel force in Deccan, much against Aurangzeb's expectations. After the arrest and murder of Sambhaji in 1689 by unspeakable cruelties, the Mughal emperor thought that he had crushed the Marathas once and for all and became quite content with his achievements in Deccan. But, Marathas regrouped themselves with a new spirit to avenge the death of Sambhaji and harassed the Mughal army in many pitched battles with the help of several able commanders such as Santaji Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav. I believe, Aurangzeb started losing his grip effectively over Deccan after the death of Shivaji especially from the last two decades of the 17th century. He was harried more by Shivaji's successors than Shivaji himself. His unwavering nature to compromise also had its part to play in this whole pandemonium. He rejected several peace proposals from the side of Sambhaji and declared that peace with that 'Kafar Bachah' will be with swords.¹¹ The emperor also terminated any piece term offered to him by Abul Hasan, the

¹⁰ Lane-Poole, S. (1893). *Rulers of India: Aurangzeb, Emperor of Hindustan*. p.70

¹¹ Kulkarni, G. T. (1977-78). Deccan Invasion (1682-1707) and a Psycho-Religio Analysis of Aurangzeb. *Bulletins of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute*. Vol. 37. No. 1/4. p.64

ruler of Golconda, and remained in his previously held staunch position to wipe out his enemies from Deccan, as mentioned by M. Athar Ali.¹² Anyway, after being constantly vexed by growing Maratha control in front of his eyes, the beleaguered Mughal emperor directed his energy back again to his long-standing nemeses: the Deccan sultanates. Bijapur and Golconda were Aurangzeb's unfulfilled desires as he had a long and eventful history with them. His primary interest was to conquer and bring them under his subjugation. All the initial energies were exhausted to capture these two states but the sudden Maratha intervention changed the dimension and turned the whole Deccan region into a jigsaw puzzle. As the emperor failed to deter the Maratha power, he performed the final clampdown over the Shia states. Thus after years of struggle, cunning politics, deceit and treachery, Bijapur and Golconda were finally annexed to the Mughal Empire in 1686 and 1687 respectively. Anyhow, the enduring image of Aurangzeb and Shivaji being arch-rivals is fraught with historical and literary romanticism as it was, in every sense, a Mughal versus Maratha struggle as Shivaji's successors continued giving befitting replies against the embattled Mughal emperor's repeated hostilities despite having multiple challenges and restrictions.

The annexation of Bijapur and Golconda was no success for the Mughal emperor as it was bound to happen one day or the other. The seizure also came at a time when it was completely needless. Aurangzeb's 'success' was a mere consolation and it was neither remarkably important for Mughal Empire nor very prestigious for Aurangzeb's image. This also took place at a distressing period when the people, the exchequer, the soldiers, and the power (Aurangzeb) himself were exhausted and frustrated. On and above that, during his entire time in Deccan, Aurangzeb strained his relationship with the Rajputs, the biggest support and workforce of the Mughals throughout the years. The relationship that was nourished by Akbar and greatly carried forward by his successors was spoiled by Aurangzeb due to his negligence and audacity. His subsequent ill-treatment with Jai Singh I generated rifts between the Rajputs and the Mughals. The haughty demeanour and an indignant gesture of Aurangzeb towards the Jats and the Satnamis did not go in his favour as well. Therefore, the internal revolts of various disgruntled groups and the lack of support from the Rajputs multiplied the difficulties and placed Aurangzeb in a very unfavourable situation. He was encircled by enemies from all sides and, to a great extent, responsible for this ensuing bad blood. "The personal qualities of Aurangzeb....became his negative points"; believed Jadunath Sarkar as mentioned by Chandra.¹³ But the irony lies in the fact that Aurangzeb was/is heavily opinionated for every single problem arising out of the cracks of his empire. Some of them were his self-created errors; some of them were bound to happen with or without his involvement. The current researches show that Aurangzeb was neither a messiah nor an epitome of cruelty but "someone representing an old order that

could not recognize.....the stirring and incipient growth of a new socio-economic system".¹⁴

To conclude, it can certainly be asserted that this paper is not an attempt to offer a new perspective but a conscious effort to judge the events from a layperson's viewpoint. Thus, I have avoided the intricate details (such as names, events, opinions, and so on) as they are already available everywhere (from the not-so-supportive online databases to the critically acclaimed written materials) and don't serve the purpose. Several prominent historians played their part and significantly contributed to this debate and enriched it with different aspects. A plethora of successive efforts were also made to dissect the existing opinions to present them in a different light. Hence, repeating the same story without displaying a different viewpoint is a waste of time for the readers and doesn't incite excitement in their minds. But in a country of decaying moral orders, religious strife and divisions, opinions of the public can be manipulated if the knowledge is restricted to a particular section and is not disseminated among the larger audiences. Aside from the historical spectrum, it is also highly unlikely that common people will express interest in each historical interpretation of events. But our past knowledge and understanding are vastly shaped by history itself and our perception is moulded in this due process sometimes without our knowledge. Therefore, I have tried to proffer a simple narration of events and avoided the jungle of information and opinions. It's always better to reach to the core of the problem and grasp it effectively without being besotted with a vast range of judgments. Obviously, opinions and judgments are necessary and historical participations are always imminent to counter the ambiguities and exhibit a clear narrative but individual rationale should also come into play. One should always judge Aurangzeb in terms of the political contexts of Deccan in the 17th century instead of being influenced by the mere incidents that followed one another. "We shall understand that Aurangzeb's involvement in Deccan was necessary" as he also wisely comprehended the rise of Marathas as "potential rivals and anticipated that they might join hands with "the two Shia kingdoms in Deccan".¹⁵ "It was, thus necessary to crush the Marathas before they could align themselves with Bijapur and Golconda".¹⁶ Hence, there were valid reasons behind his occupation in Deccan and it was chiefly because of the political and socio-economic necessities than a personal penchant of the ruler. But Aurangzeb aimed at conquering Deccan at a time when the time itself did not favour him, resulting in a spectacular collapse. Finally, after years of tiresome struggles and subsequent failures, the emperor made peace with his destiny. Being brokenhearted, he moved to Ahmednagar, where he breathed his last in 1707. His dejected attitude was further reiterated from a disheartened letter, written and forwarded by him to one of his sons in his deathbed. "I came alone and I am going alone. I have not done well to the country and the people, and of the future. There is no hope. I take with me the burden of my shortcomings".¹⁷

¹² Ibid

¹³ Chakrabarty, D. (2015). *The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar and His Empire of Truth*. University of Chicago Press. Introduction, p.18

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kochhar, S. K. (1979). *Teaching of History*. Sterling Publishers Private Limited. p.364

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Khanna, K. K. (2015). *Art of Generalship*. Vij Books India Private Ltd. p.127