



The Mughal Religious Policy With Special Reference To The Temples Of Mathurā

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Abstract:

Historians of Mathurā tend to evaluate the Mughal relations with Mathurā in terms of the religious policy of individual Mughal rulers, perhaps in the light of the abovementioned impressions. The objective of this study seeks to distinguish fact from fiction, establishing how the Mughal system of religious grants during the rule of either Akbar or Aurangzeb was not determined by the individual ruler's religious policy but rather by a more generic and consistent approach to the question of grants, influenced by broader economic and political considerations of the empire.

Keywords: *Farman, Mathurā, Mughal, Religious Grants*

The phenomenon of religion has played a substantial and intricate part in the progress of human civilization throughout its different phases. It exerted a substantial influence on politics for the governing elites; nonetheless, each periodical governed in accordance with the prevailing conditions of the time. Upon careful observation, it becomes evident that the phenomena of religion have consistently served as a tool to acquire political power by captivating the interests of the people, even in the present day. Following their triumph in Northern India, the Mughal rulers underwent a shift in their foreign strategy. One of the significant aspects pertained to their religious policy, a subject of considerable disagreement despite its crucial role in shaping the historical narrative of medieval India. There exists a multitude of disagreements among historians regarding this matter. This study specifically examined the Mughal religious policy and procedures regarding the allocation of funds to religious institutions such as temples and devout individuals. Although many local historians have criticized Aurangzeb primarily for the destruction of the renowned Keshav Rai temple, some contemporary historians of Mughal India focus only on the temple demolition, which exposes the religious prejudice of the rulers. The fact that the Keshav Rai Temple of Mathura was destroyed at the behest of Aurangzeb has been magnified to bolster the claim that Aurangzeb was the most intolerant monarch. However, this research study contradicts this by revealing that the same ruler was responsible for the Grants already allocated to Mathura's religious institutions like temples and holy people. This was an extension of Akbar's overarching strategic tolerance policy towards non-Muslims.¹

Mathura is often considered a great and sacred place among India's seven holy towns. The city has always been of immense religious significance since ancient times. It

played an influential role in the development of religion, philosophy, art, language and literature. The eastern boundary of this region was formed by the river Yamuna, on the west coast of which lay Mathura proper. The northern boundary of this region touches Saikhas; the north-western and western boundary touches Hodal and Nonera, respectively. In the south-west lies Kaman & Koh, and the south-eastern boundary touches Gokul, Mahaban, etc.; to the east of the town lies Vrindavan.

Braj refers to the countryside of Mathura, where Krishna grazed his cattle, and stories of his youthful adventures are associated with this area. It may also be used to designate the larger area in which the Braj dialect was spoken, namely the districts of Mathura and Bharatpur and the adjoining districts such as Aligarh, Hathras, Agra and Alwar. The Pilgrimage circuit of Braj covers an area stretching ten kilometres to the east and north of Mathura and nearly fifty to the west and north. The Yamuna winds through this area's eastern part, particularly Shergarh, Virndaban, Mathura and Gokul.

The issue of temple destruction should be scrutinized due to its connection to the relocation of idols to different areas. The idol from the Giriraj Temple at Govardhana was dispatched to Rana Raj Singh, the chief of Mewar, in Nathdwara for the purpose of being rebuilt.² At the same time, one more idol from the temple of *Govardhana* was relocated to Amber.³ Before the Keshav Rai temple demolition, the idols were transported to Agra and subsequently interred beneath the staircase of the mosque of Begum Qudsia.⁴ Once the primary temple of Mathura (Keshav Rai) was destroyed, it is possible that fear psychosis could have become dominant in Mathura and the neighbourhood region. Two records in the National Archives of India relating to Aurangzeb's 14th and 18th reign years substantiate this assertion. These records provide the initial modern documentary proof of the temple's demolition and further details suggesting that the Puritans and other individuals linked to the Govind Dev temple escaped to the Kaman hills.⁵

The 1669 Jat uprising in Mathura 1669 led by Gokula, has also been attributed with a religious significance by several academics. It is widely considered a result of Aurangzeb's purportedly "intolerant" religious stance. Although it may not be the sole factor behind the mentioned uprising, at least one document indicates that even then, the Mughal emperor diligently addressed the requests made by the Hindus in the region. According to an official document retained in the National Archives of India, Kishan Charan, a resident of Vrindavan, fled from that area due to the Jat uprisings. He was the proprietor of four buildings and two stores in Mathura. Ghulam Nabi, the Darogha of Bayt-ul-Mal, lodged on his property in his absence. Under the representation of Kishan Charan, the Darogha was stripped of all his possessions and the property was subsequently restored to him.⁶ The significance of this evidence lies in its indication that the Hindu deities also escaped from Mathura as a result of the Jat

rebellions and Aurangzeb's inclination to save the lives and possessions of all his citizens, including those who were not Muslims.

Historians appear to be split into two factions on this matter. The one group comprises historians such as A.L. Srivastava, J.N. Sarkar, S.R. Sharma, and others. This cohort of historians held the belief that the religious orthodoxy of the king exerted influence on any action taken that went against the welfare of the non-Muslim community within the state. The perception is that Muslim and non-Muslim interests are mutually incompatible since the benefit of one results in the detriment of the other. According to S. R. Sharma, the rule of emperor Jahangir can be seen as a Response of Islamic civilization to the liberal policies enacted by Akbar, which began with the emperor's ascension.⁷ Such perspectives are devoid of historical credibility. The Mughals, including Jahangir, Aurangzeb, and others, implemented a range of policies during their rule, numerous of which were influenced by religious factors. Can a singular criterion, as proposed by these knowledgeable historians, be used to evaluate the Mughal era systematically? Moreover, how can all religious actions carried out by Jahangir be correctly characterized as either anti-Hindu or pro-Islamic? Hence, Sharma's arguments are challenging to endorse, and it can be pretty deduced that Jahangir's policies sustained support Akbar's predominantly progressive religious policies.

The historians of the first group initiating the discussion have categorically labelled rulers of the Mughal Empire as "religiously intolerant or orthodox rulers"; the other group has stepped up to challenge these claims. Prominent academics in this group include "M. Athar Ali, Satish Chandra, and others. M. Athar Ali has extensively refuted all claims made by historians of the first tradition regarding the emperor Jahangir".⁸ Similarly, historian of Medieval Indian history Satish Chandra has dedicated extensive time to substantiating his argument through his writing.

The unfortunate argument is that although numerous less important and non-religious matters are emphasized, more specific crucial matters remain uninvestigated. In an effort to challenge any claims about the religious orthodoxy of Aurangzeb, M. Athar Ali has extensively examined the makeup of Aurangzeb's aristocracy according to their religious affinities, namely Muslims and Non-Muslims. His thesis is that the presence of non-Muslims in the Mughal nobility grew from Akbar's rule to Aurangzeb's. The analysis of a religious perspective has been adopted in analyzing the War of Succession of 1658. Using statistical data on the composition of the nobility, Athar Ali once again demonstrated that the succession dispute was not rooted in religious or sectarian associations.

Nevertheless, historians are dichotomously divided on this matter. Those who classify Aurangzeb as an orthodox man and Dara as a liberal man perceive this war as a religious battle for Islamic progress. Medieval period historians like Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi and Zaheerudin Faruki argue that Aurangzeb marshalled the Muslim

4269 | **Puneet Yadav The Mughal Religious Policy With Special Reference To The Temples Of Mathurā**

community against Dara, a disloyal, and fought for religious principles rather than political power.⁹ These historians perceive this as a conflict centred around the succession of both communities, namely Muslims and Non-Muslims, instead of being shared between two individuals. Another cohort of history writers, like Jadunath Sarkar and Stanley Lane Pool et al., described it as a "clash between two personalities following opposing and conflicting religious beliefs: Dara Shikoh, who espoused tolerance, and Aurangzeb, who adhered to orthodoxy". J.N. Sarkar argues that the primary goal of Aurangzeb in waging this war was to Islamize the entire people of the realm.¹⁰

At this point, the researcher may pose a few straightforward questions in this study. Primarily, if Aurangzeb was engaged in a religious conflict rather than a power struggle, after eliminating the considered main threat to Islam, especially Dara, why did he not make an offer to his younger and trustworthy brother Murad? Murad aligned himself with Aurangzeb during the conflict. However, ultimately, Aurangzeb abandoned him and condemned him to capital punishment. The murder of Murad appears to be primarily motivated by political considerations, as he did not exhibit any willingness towards "religious toleration," a characteristic that Aurangzeb may have perceived as a potential challenge to his revered religious beliefs. Given that the primary aim of the succession war was the comprehensive Islamization of the whole population of the kingdom, it can be argued that Aurangzeb should have been the sole agent responsible for all endeavours to attain this purpose.

Nevertheless, he refrained from doing so in order to provide proof. Let us cite the statistics provided by Athar Ali regarding the count of Hindu Mansabdars under the rule of emperor Aurangzeb. Moreover, Undoubtedly, he would have abstained from participating in the fight against the Decanni rulers who followed the Islamic religion. On the contrary, he would have unified them without assimilating their lands to counter the Hindus, namely Shivaji, and promote the cause of Islam. Athar Ali challenges "the concept of succession contestation between Hindus and Muslims. Regarding his account, both Hindus and Muslims supported Aurangzeb and Dara equally. Therefore, neither of the contenders to the throne generated significant religious-based support division".¹¹ Athar Ali has attempted to substantiate his thesis by a presentation of the following statistics:¹²

	Marathas	Rajputs	Other Hindus	Total
Dara	02	22	-	24
Aurangzeb	10	11	02	23

The number of nobility members who gave their support to the brothers Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb.

Athar Ali has demonstrated that "out of the 24 Hindu aristocrats who backed the 'great tolerant' Dara, a minimum of 23 non-Muslim aristocrats aligned themselves with Aurangzeb, the self-proclaimed 'Champion of Islam'."¹³ Notably, even the royal family was fragmented, resulting in isolated non-Muslims. Specifically, two of Shahjahan's daughters, one each, sided with the cause of Dara and Aurangzeb. The above-described evidence suggests that the succession conflict was primarily motivated by the candidates' political ambitions for the sovereignty of a throne, Dara and Aurangzeb. The latter employed religious rhetoric precisely to forward his objective, namely, to claim the throne for himself by sundering the authority of Dara. Therefore, it may be confidently deduced that religious considerations did not impact the succession dispute.

Religious considerations were occasionally encompassed in allocating land grants to religious institutions and holy individuals. Nevertheless, as evidenced, the rationales underlying the allocation of these gifts were not consistently rooted in religious beliefs. The Mathura grants under the Mughal Empire provide sufficient evidence to challenge certain researchers' perspectives regarding the Mughal Empire's religious policy. An illustrative instance is the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, who has been accused of conducting religious demolitions. As per one estimate, he is thought to have instructed to demolish a maximum of 72 temples in Varanasi. One of the crucial documents is emperor Shah Jahan's Farman, dated July 1633, which provides evidence that Shah Jahan transformed the imperial donations of the Govind Dev temple into an "Inam" and subsequently bestowed it upon Mirza Raja Jai Singh. During the year 1633, temples were dismantled in Varanasi, and a grant was converted to Mathura. In her article, Heidi Pauwels discussed this feature of temple desecration and construction in a broader framework of empire policies and formations. She mentions, "It offers complementary explanations of such temple construction as a statement of dharmic kingship justifying irregular succession and upward social mobility within the Mughal imperial formation".¹⁴

The initial issuance of the Farman occurred in 1632, serving as a confirmation of the tax-exempt donation bestowed upon the temple of Madan Mohan of Mathura. Moreover, Shah Jahan issued an additional order over a similar timeframe. In 1634, a third Farman was published, acknowledging the significance of utilizing the time gong (*Ghariyal*) within temples and promoting a systematic approach to worship. This directive instructed the relevant authorities to guarantee that no obstructions were made to the sound of the time gong. Hence, we find ourselves confronted with two conflicting episodes: Shah Jahan's decree to demolish temples in 1633, juxtaposed with his directives to establish a systematic worship regime within the temples. Therefore, how could Shah Jahan be ascribed the status of an orthodox monarch based on a single order of temple destruction?

According to historical accounts, Aurangzeb has been portrayed as the most traditionalist among the Mughal emperors. Nevertheless, in terms of royal grants, his

donations to Brahmana and temples are the most notable among the Mughal rulers. Satish Chandra has taken the position that although the details of his orders for the demolition of Hindu temples have been extensively publicized, his provision of grants and other forms of "support to Hindu temples and Maths is not as widely recognized".¹⁵ According to Satish Chandra, "individuals such as Ganesh Bharati (Faquir), Bajnath Jogi, Kamal Nath Jogis, and others were recipients of donations from Aurangzeb or had their grants verified by him."¹⁶

In an identical vein, S.K. Bhatt presents an instance of a khaki Bairagi saint in Mandasaur, to whom Aurangzeb extended a loan on his transit to the Deccan. Furthermore, it is reported that "the emperor engaged in a religious discussion with the Mahant described before and was so deeply moved that he granted the request."¹⁷ The significance of this case is in its demonstration that Aurangzeb, the purported "orthodox ruler advocating for the cause of Islam," engaged in dialogues with the deities of Hinduism, which were part of the Akbari heritage. A similar exemption from Jaziya was obtained by the Brahmans of Ujjain from Aurangzeb in 1691.¹⁸ Nevertheless, S. Nurul Hasan highlights that the exemptions obtained by certain peasants in their original location are still disputed.¹⁹ Such occurrences may continue to multiply. The grants in question possess greater legitimacy compared to matters such as the number of Hindus who participated in the struggle of succession on Aurangzeb's side or the proportion of non-Muslim nobles who comprised his nobility class. The latter two matters differed from sacred considerations, principally driven by dogmatic imperatives.

Furthermore, the Mughals provided support for the arts, literature, and education within their imperial court. The patronage system encompassed intellectuals from Hindu and Muslim backgrounds, with the former receiving such support based on merit. Consequently, the monarchs were consistently influenced by their extensive cultural heritage. Therefore, the opinion expressed by historian P. N. Ojha – "Almost all the great Mughal sovereigns of India were mainly of literary accomplishment and refinement and as such patronized learning in manifold ways, e.g., establishing numerous educational institutions, financing such institutions founded by private individuals, giving suitable financial aid and emoluments to learned and renowned scholars and teachers from different parts of the country and outside and granting scholarships and stipends to the needy and promising students."²⁰ Therefore, Akbar supported Hindu poets and writers such as Madhusudhan, Damodar Bhatt, Birbal, Madho Sarawati and Narhari Mahapatra based on financial arrangements. In the translation department, numerous individuals actively contributed to translating highly esteemed translations of Sanskrit books and scriptures into Persian and other languages. The same support was provided Under the reign of Jahangir, whose court comprised prominent individuals such as Rai Manohar Lal, Bishandas (a painter), and Briusha Rai (a poet). Prominent Hindu poets under the reign of Shah Jahan were Jagannath Pandit, Sunder Das, Chintamani, Kavindracharya, Harinath, and several others. Shah Jahan presented Harinath, the son of Narpati Mahapatra, with three valuable gifts: a horse, an elephant, and a dam valued at one lakh rupees.

Similarly, the *Padshahnama* references Sunder Kavi Raj, "the poet diplomat, in relation to his trip to Hindu insurgents Jujhar Singh Bundela and Raja Jagat Singh of Jammu".²¹ Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan, was also a "great patron of men of art and letters. His court poet, Chandrabhan, undertook the translation of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Yogavashistha into Persian. Moreover, he contributed a stone railing to the temple of Keshavrai."²² Dara instructed his officers to procure revenue-free grazing for cows and cattle belonging to specific temples in accordance with the grants granted for this purpose in previous periods.

Furthermore, Aurangzeb offered imperial patronage to Hindu individuals involved in scholarly pursuits, including Birdas, Bhushan, Brinda, and Iswar Das Nagar. Thus, it is clear that the Mughals did not display intolerant conduct despite the claims made by several historians. They demonstrated a considerable degree of tolerance throughout their rule. It is of equal relevance to note that the distribution of royal monies to religious institutions and individuals cannot be adequately elucidated only through cultural lineages. It is imperative to consider the Mathura gifts due to the significant role that Mathura played as a prominent Hindu religious hub. It is regrettable that local historians fail to take into account these factual details when recounting the historical narrative of Mathura during the Mughal era. In addition to its religious significance, the geopolitical positioning of Mathura played a pivotal role due to its geographical placement between two prominent hubs of Mughal authority, namely Agra and Delhi. Thus, the imperative to uphold peace and order in this location was paramount. A clear distinction between religion and politics was absent during the medieval era. At the local level, the temples, priests, and local divines possessed the capacity to garner popular backing promptly and potentially engage in conspiratorial activities against the ruler or his particular policies. Mathura occupies a strategically significant location, wherein any potential uprising or disruption may have posed a more significant threat or risk compared to other sacred sites of comparable importance.

Therefore, it is possible that the Mughals donated to Mathura temples to obtain the support of the local non-Muslim aristocracy. This measure may have averted disruptions at the regional level and guaranteed that the active collaboration of the local elite could effectively restrict any potential problem of public animosity. Here, we approach the perspective of J.S. Grewal and B.N. Goswami, who argue that "the majority of the recipients of royal grants had significant social influence. They perceive that by providing grants to these individuals, the Mughals established what might be readily referred to as 'vested interests.' Furthermore, Muzaffar Alam characterized the recipients as 'problem creators at the local level'."²³ Despite the regional historians' assertion that Mathura did not play a significant economic role, it is well-known that Mathura was a prominent Vaishnavite hub throughout the Mughal era. The Vaishnavites, in general, were part of the "Mahajans" class, whose primary occupation was trade and commerce. Therefore, it may be inferred that Mathura was a thriving trade and business hub. Notably, Bayana, situated in Mathura, was a

renowned hub for Indigo farming. The evidence indicates a direct connection between Bayana and Rajasthan, facilitated by a well-established route that passed through Mathura. It is established that Rajasthan, in a reciprocal manner, maintained a connection with the seaports of Gujarat, potentially yielding advantageous outcomes for the economy of Mathura. Seaports and Mathura are also linked with the migration of Lord Krishna from Vrindavan to Mathura and, after that, to Dwarka, which has been extensively documented in the primary sources. Furthermore, this implies that Mathura may have had convenient proximity to Gujarat, a renowned hub of commerce during that era.

Moreover, our examination of Mathura gifts has revealed that individual temples did not limit their focus solely to religious affairs. The bequest made by Raja Todar Mal included the provision of *khudkashta*, which denoted that the bestowed lands would be nurtured under the supervision of temples, engaging these temples in agricultural production and transportation. Furthermore, it is evident from Irfan Habib's recent writings that the temples and other land recipients in Mathura were actively selling and acquiring land. These empirical findings demonstrate that temples held significant economic significance during the historical period. Lastly, temples were allocated "khairat" (daily offerings), which appeared to have entailed certain aspects of financial administration.

The "Madad-i-Ma'ash" or "Aimma" endowments were the allocations made to religious individuals and institutions during the Mughal era. Among the recipients of such donations, Abul Fazl enumerates four distinct categories:

- (a) Intellectually inclined males
- (b) Devout followers of religion
- (c) Impoverished individuals without any means of subsistence
- (d) Individuals of aristocratic lineage who have not engaged in economic activities.

In the Mughal Empire, religious gifts were commonly referred to as "Suyurghal" grants. The term primarily denoted the land classification designated to grant Madad-i-mash titles. All recipients of grants in the Mathura province, namely individuals of intellectual pursuits and pious followers, were classified as members of the second category, encompassing both institutions and individuals, primarily devout believers. In addition to prominent individuals such as the Narayandas, Kamacharya, Jiya Gosain, and others, this also encompassed various temples, including the Madan Mohan and Govind-Dev.

Shireen Moosvi, citing Abul Fazl, asserts it is said that Emperor Akbar bestowed monetary and land donations. She considers Gujarat the sole focus of her research and attempts to assess its similarities to those produced inland. Her analysis reveals that the former constituted 13.3% of the projected revenue from land grants. The land grants are classified as "Milk" or "Madad-i-mash" and were differentiated from

the grants provided in currency, known as "Wazifa." The Mughal emperors were providing grants in both land and financial forms. The tax-free land provided by Akbar and Jahangir to the Mathura temples and individuals was effectively protected by Shah Jahan.

Regarding Wazifa, Aurangzeb, in one instance, stipulated that "Zamindars of 18 Parganas in the Braj region must annually contribute one rupee to each village to support a small number of devout individuals in the area."²⁴ In contrast to Gujarat, Abul Fazl's testimony lacks detailed statistical information regarding the overall revenue exemption in Mathura, specifically in terms of donations. A total of 730 bighas were allocated to temples and institutions from Pargana Mathura. Among these, 469 bighas were supplied by the hamlet of Dosaij, the settlement of Mathura provided 136 bighas, and 125 bighas were donated by villages such as Rajpur and Dholera. Parganas such as Sahr, Hodal, and Mangotala made far fewer contributions.

Irfan Habib mentions that "these grants (milk) were given for a lifetime or in perpetuity, but no grant could be passed on to the heirs without the imperial sanction."²⁵ In one of his writings, Iqbal Hussain primarily addresses these regulations.²⁶ According to Ain, if grants were distributed to a group of individuals without clearly specifying the distribution of each grantee's portion in the Zimn, and if one of the grantees died, the Sadr was mandated to ascertain their portion, which would be included in the Khalisha. The procedure above would persist until the heirs personally appeared and submitted their claim before the court. Furthermore, during his eighth year of reign, Shah Jahan issued a decree stipulating that in the event of the demise of the initial grantee, precisely half of all grants surpassing 30 bighas would be reinstated. However, Assuming the award was 30 bighas or less, it would be distributed entirely to the heirs of the dead, subject to the verification of their genealogy.

Furthermore, an additional order issued by Shah Jahan in 1640 amended the order as mentioned above. This subsequent order stipulated that the entirety of the grant would be reinstated at the death of the recipient unless the original document explicitly stated: "Ba farzandan" (including the offspring). Half of the grant would be allocated to the legal heirs without such language. Furthermore, throughout the reign of Aurangzeb, it was mandated that any grants need confirmation in the event of the demise of the first donor, provided that the award amount did not surpass 30 bighas of land. In the event that the grant totalled more than 30 bighas, the state assumed responsibility for half of the award, while the remaining half was transferred to the successors of the original donor.

Nevertheless, a clause allowed the heirs to appeal to the emperor if they were dissatisfied with the diminished grants. Only after demonstrating their lineage could they assert their entitlement to a more substantial grant. Nevertheless, in numerous instances, the beneficiaries were legally entitled to keep 50% of the inheritance only if the original agreement included the phrase "including the offspring." Nevertheless,

Augrangzeb's Farman, in the 34th year of his reign, fundamentally altered the rule mentioned above. Rules pertaining to 'Madad-i-ma'ash' also extended to the grants in Mathura. The funding was awarded indefinitely. Akbar's donations to Mathura were bestowed on the benefit of temples, which were enduring or eternal institutions. All awards issued by Jahangir to persons such as Kamadevachara, Narayandas, and others were stipulated to include the provision "including the sons." This indicated that these donations were not to be rescinded upon the original recipient's death but were to be held by their heirs. Analogous regulations were in place throughout the rules of emperors Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.

Concerning the initial Madad-i-ma'ash restriction mentioned by Iqbal Husain, in our situation, multiple grants were distributed to specific personal entities without clearly specifying the portion allocated to each recipient. Nevertheless, our records lack information on the allocation of the grants among the recipients in such instances. Presumably, in the event of the death of any of the initial beneficiaries, Sadr would determine his portion once it was returned to the Khalisa control of the land until the heir asserted their lawful entitlement. The second principle proposed by Iqbal Husain appears to be inapplicable to Mathura donations. Shah Jahan validated Todarmal's bequest in favour of Gosain Das subsequent to the demise of Sri Chand in 1632. Furthermore, the magnitude of the award remained the same, namely 88 biswas and nine biswas. Furthermore, Mathura was not subject to the third regulation as there was no documentation specifying that the continuation of complete grants is awarded at the death of the initial recipient. Half of the granted amount is allocated if the grant document contains the words 'Ba Farzandan.' The stipend was reallocated among the descendants or successors of the original beneficiary, including Gopal Das, Jiv Gosain, Sri Chand, and Gosain Das.

Furthermore, Mathura grants were not subject to the fourth rule. The Mathura grants were not rigorously implemented due to the approval of the existing Mathura gifts by Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb. Additionally, the fifth regulation stipulated that if land allocation exceeded 30 bighas, half of the reward would be refunded. In his article, Iqbal Hussain concludes by mentioning, "Where the regulations for the resumption of the grant could be applied, the Mughal administration adopted a generous attitude and restored the entire land grants to the heirs of the original grantees. Generally, as transpires from the resumption of an increase in grants, it depended upon the emperor's will to observe or ignore regulations".²⁷ The beneficiaries of the grant were granted the privilege to acquire land revenue and retain it as their income while also being granted an exemption from the obligation to remit government land revenue, which refers to the income generated by local authorities through levies.

The administration of the Mughals derived calculations for the ability to generate revenue from these parcels of land from an extensive survey. The Ain dataset demonstrates that most data consist of precise values and have not been

approximated.²⁸ The literature of evidence clearly shows that the land allocations of the Mughals were meticulously recorded and contained exact calculations of the measured area (*Arazi*) and the expected revenue (*Jama*). Unfortunately, comprehensive numerical data regarding *Suyurghal* in Mathura is absent at present.

Often, endowments were awarded to individuals with a spiritual tendency, who were then expected to offer prayers for the well-being and security of the emperor and the realm. Therefore, Aurangzeb bestowed to Ganesh Bharti, a Faqir, the authority to govern the village of Kharantiya, Pargana Siwana, Ilaqa Jodhpur, from 1680 to 1703. In 1691, the Subadar of Malwa issued the Parwana certificate to the Jaziya Collector of Pargana Shajapur in the Sarkar Sarangpur regency. Suba Malwa provided an exemption to the Brahmins of Ujjain, relieving them from the requirement of paying the *Jaziya* fee. It was anticipated that at the Parwana, the priest class would offer prayers for the well-being and success of the emperor.²⁹ Emperor Jahangir referred to This group of recipients as 'Lashkar-i-Dua' or 'Army of Prayers'. Comparable expectations from the recipients likewise characterize the Mathura grants. Hence, Akbar's Farman of 1568 depicts Jiv Gosain, the recipient of the boon, as an impoverished individual engaged in prayer for His Majesty. A significant number of the grants had provisions such as "*Wastey Kharch-i-Faqir*" and "*Ba Wastey Kharch-i-Talaba*," indicating that the recipients were intended for individuals with low incomes and to cover the expenses of students. The latter was principally intended to offer complimentary accommodation and dining amenities to the Khanqahs and Maktabas. Moreover, the recipients of the grants were also anticipated to assume constructive responsibilities within their respective regions. The significance of the Khanqahs and Maktabas is demonstrated by Aurangzeb's bestowal of the "Firangi Mahal" to Mulla Nizamuddin, who transformed this Mahal into a sophisticated hub of education.

The primary materials we have examined provide a limited number of direct references about the actions of the grant holders in Mathura. Nevertheless, the assertions made in these and other sources provide indirect evidence supporting the grantees' execution of these responsibilities. It is evident that, alongside arable land, wastelands were also allocated, granting the recipients the right to benefit from these associated profits. It is plausible that these grounds were transformed into arable lands in the region of Mathura. Moreover, it is evident that numerous restrooms, known as Sarais, were connected to diverse temples in Mathura, and these structures continue to endure in the present day. The Mathura temples exhibited a significant population of bovines, including cows and oxen, within their premises. It is highly probable that the grantees also attempted to initiate the infrastructure development of wells and the planting of trees. Ultimately, the paramount element of the donations was their inclusion of prayers dedicated to the welfare of the monarch and the realm. The preservation and maintenance of Mathura grants have been diligently upheld, although our sources do not provide specific proof to support this claim. Nevertheless, these donations indicate Mathura's political and economic prominence and little religious significance. Moreover, it appears that the considerations above

were a driving force behind the Mughals' decision to distribute several grants to the places of worship and citizens within the Mathura area.

This research study discussed the Mughal tax-free endowments provided to the temples of Mathura. The farmers' allocation of these grants to non-Muslim organizations illuminates the dynamics between the political authority and the governed, particularly regarding a local or regional leader. An exhaustive examination of these farmers and a rigorous comparison analysis reveal the true intention of the emperor. Although local historical accounts of Mathura under the Mughals suggest that there was no direct connection between the rulers and the governed population, our research has shown that the contact between the rulers and the city was not merely indirect and occasional. Contrarily, the Mughals maintained strong connections with temples and devoted town citizens, employing imperial subsidies. The gift records indicate that this dialogue was a direct and prolonged engagement involving the Akbar emperors until Aurangzeb's reign (1556-1707). The study uses Persian, Hindi and Sanskrit texts to demonstrate the intricate nature of causes that go beyond the religious rhetorics employed by certain historiographers. It provides supplementary reasons for constructing temples as a declaration of dharmic kingship, which justifies the uneven intergenerational succession and rising socioeconomic mobility in the Mughal empire structure.

History and historiography are no longer limited to previous political events. Its network has expanded to include the general population with communal and sacred organizations, traditions and rituals, festivals, leisure activities, and relationships among persons. Moreover, the government implements these policies, and the people's opinions and responses also assume significance. This phenomenon is most effectively analyzed by examining the literary works from a specific era. Literary works produced by mature writers serve as reliable interpreters, effectively depicting the dynamic nature of social existence and prevailing popular sentiments. Mathura held significant importance as a religious hub and a prime political and commercial centre. From the analysis, it can be concluded that the Mughal emperors implemented a policy of religious tolerance. In accordance with the politico-socio-economic requirements of the contemporary age, they frequently expressed their support and provided gifts to the temples of Mathura, hence establishing the foundation of Mughal religious policy. Given the circumstances, Mughal emperors regarded temples as under their sovereign authority. Based on an examination of primary materials from the specified era, it can be posited that the underlying motivations for donations and patronage were predominantly religious, albeit not exclusively so. The political system experienced perpetual fluctuations and tensions due to the dynamic changing of alliances between the central government and local governing bodies. Local elites' appropriation of imperial authority facilitated their access to symbolic and 'national' resources. The political structure exhibited a notable degree of flux and volatility. Hence, it is evident through the analysis of court documents and collating with local writings of the region that the Mughals provided financial resources to religious organizations and individuals in Mathura for the objectives mentioned above,

transcending mere religious intentions. Based on the strategic and geographical considerations, it can be argued that Mathura is a vulnerable spatial region.

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