

# **Astronomical and Astrological Dimensions of Tuzk i Jahangiri: Memoirs of Emperor Jahangir.**

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## **Abstract:**

Nur-ud-din Salim Jahangir, fourth ruler of the mughal dynasty in India, ruled from 1605AD until his death in 1627AD. Although most of the historians have portrayed him as a ruler, ruling under the influence of others and an addict of opium, but his own memoirs present a different side of his personality. His personality was multi-dimensional and he was a polymath. Wise politician, deep thinker, keen observer, a naturalist ,an artist, these were some of the aspects of his personality that reflect in his memoirs. He kept record of everything that he encountered and witnessed in his daily life and named the compilation as "Tuzk-I-Jahangiri". Analyzing his memoirs the readers come across various forms of knowledge which include biology, geography, travelogue, and biographies of some of the eminent personalities of that period. This paper shall focus on two of the multi-layered dimensions of this book i.e astronomical and astrological dimensions. The aim is to shed light on the least considered traits of the Jahangir's personality with reference to his own memoirs.

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## **Introduction:**

Tuzk-i-Jahangiri or Jahangir nameh or the memoirs of Jahangir is the autobiography of Nur-ud-din Salim Jahangir, fourth emperor of Mughal dynasty in India. Jahangir began to write his autobiography in 1605 AD, the year in which he ascended the throne. In the year 1624 AD, due to his deteriorating health, he gave up writing his memoirs and then entrusted the task to Mua'atamid Khan (the author of Iqbal nameh and one of the closest nobles of Jahangir), who continued the memoirs to the beginning of the nineteenth

year. From where, it was taken up by Muhammad Hadi, another noble of Jahangir's court, who continued it to Jahangir's death.(Jahangir 1909) Jahangir by writing his memoirs ,followed the tradition of his ancestors like Amir taimur and babur. Who also have autobiographies in their credit. But Jahangir went a step further and besides the history of his reign, he includes details like his reflection on art, politics, and also information about his family. Jahangir chose simple Persian language for his memoirs as it was commonly understood by the masses and was also the official language at that time. Apparently this book is widely accepted as historical account of Jahangir's reign and his biography but this is not a mere account of his daily routine, rather this book has various dimensionS and cognitive aspects. Besides serving as an authentic historical account, Tuzk-I-Jahangiri stands equal in the row of geography, adds to one's knowledge of biology(especially zoology and botany), could be counted as travelogue and records biography of various significant personalities of Jahangir's reign. As we turn the pages of this book, we come across such various aspects and dimensions that not only amaze its readers but provide them with quite good scientific knowledge as well.

Among these, the two dimensions that are going to be discussed in this paper are astrological and astronomical dimensions of Tuzk-I-Jahangiri. Which form an important part of this book as they provides an insight of happenings during Jahangir's reign along with showcasing Jahangir's curious nature and his keen observation. As Salim Ali, the famous ornithologist and naturalist, in his research paper states, " besides a passion for justice the outstanding features of his (Jahangir's) character were his love of nature and his powers of observation".(Salim Ali 1927,p 841 ).

Jahangir, as extracted from his memoirs, was well versed in many fields of knowledge like biology, geography and various arts. Similarly we come across his astronomical knowledge and astrological beliefs in his memoirs.

#### **Astronomical data in Tuzk-i-Jahangiri:**



Although Jahangir did not belong to the community of the scientists, but the amount of data that he provides in his memoirs regarding some astronomical events and their effects in his era are enough for showcasing his interest in science and his power of observation. During his reign there were no proper scientific terms and tools, still he manages to describe some events that occurred during his reign with quite efficiency. Analyzing his memoirs we come across two astronomical events that he records in his memoirs.

During the thirteenth regional year after his accession i.e 1618AD, he records observing a comet that had been appearing constantly for some days during Jahangir's camp at Ramgarh. He describes its exact appearance in following word, "for some nights there had been appearing at three hours before sunrise, a (luminous) vapour and smoke of the shape of a pillar in the atmosphere".(Jahangir 1909). Further he explains its peculiarities, minute details and movements and gets its location calculated by astronomers and astrologers. He adds, "in their books astrologers call such a phenomenon by the term of Harbah, the spear, and have written that its appearance portends weakness to the kings of Arabia and poits to their enemies prevailing over them. God knows the truth"(3). Afterwards He goes into further detail, demonstrating his knowledge.

Another event that he records is that of falling of a meteorite in the state of Jullundhar during the sixteenth year from his accession i.e in 1621AD. After narrating all the nature, conditions and circumstances at that moment, he writes ahead that he made the meteorite weigh in his presence which was 150tolah. He then order ustad Daud to make of it a sword a dagger and a knife. He further writes, "he represented that it did not stand the blow of the hammer and fell to pieces. I ordered him in that case to mix it with other iron and make use of it. Accordingly he mixed three parts of the meteorite iron and one part of the other iron and having made two swords, one dagger and one knife brought them to me. The alloy had brought out its quality like true Yamani and Junubi swords it could be bent and became straight again. I ordered them to try in my presence

.it cut very well. I named them qat'e(decisive) and barq(power or lightning) "(Jahangir 1909). He then adds the following ruba'ai of bebadal Khan and writes that it fits the situation perfectly.:-

از شاه جهانگیر جهان یافت نظام  
افتاده به عهد او ز برق آهن خام  
زان آهن شد به حکم عالم گیرش  
یک خنجر و کارد با دو شمشیر تمام  
(Jahangir, 1981) و (شعله برق پادشاهی) تاریخ یافتہ.

While narrating this event Jahangir demonstrates his knowledge of metals along with his scientific knowledge.

Apart from these two events there are some instances in Jahangir's memoirs where he speaks of solar and lunar eclipses. Although He does not elaborate the events but merely mentions the date and the time of each eclipse.

#### **Astrological beliefs of Jahangir with reference to Tuzk-i-Jahangiri:**

According to Paul Thagurd, "Astrology is a pseudoscience that claims to divine information about human affairs and terrestrial events by studying the movements and relative positions of celestial objects"(Thagurd 1978,p223-234). Hence astrology is the study of movements of celestial bodies in the belief that these movements can have an effect on one's personal and public life. Jahangir had certain sort of astrological beliefs. He had some astrologers as his courtiers as well. Jootak Rai was his court astrologer. He also mentions some other astrologers in his memoirs which includes Fateh Mohammad Hussaini. On whose true prediction, Jahangir once provided him financial aid to build a khanqah for himself.(Jahangir 1909). About the astrological beliefs of Jahangiri, M.A Alvi and A.Rahman in their book "Jahangir the naturalist" writes, " at the same time Jahangir was often superstitious according to the fashion of the time, thus his faith in astrology, then understood to be as real as any other science. But superstition went no further with him than taking auguries or carefully observing the advice of his trusted astrologers. It was so co-existent and never confused with his



innate rational sensibility.....interested in mysticism, fond of the company of recluses, yet never intrigued by self-same demigods whose hoaxes he lays bare, he reveals a sagacious mind, resolved by its own disposition”(M.Alvi 1968,p9).

Jahangir, in his memoirs, mentions that each one should respect the stars as they represent the light of God.(Jahangir 1909). His belief in astrology was so that he often sit on the throne on the good hours fixed by some astrologer for bringing the good fortune. Apart from that he speaks of fortune telling from the book of Hafiz that is commonly called as “faal-e-Hafiz”. (Jahangir 1909).

Jahangir in his memoirs has narrated about few predictions made by Jootak Rai that instantly came true. One of them was about the incident that happened with Shah Shuja, when he fell off the roof while playing and miraculously survived and was unharmed. Jahangir claims that Jutak Rai had already informed him three months before the incident, which came true.(Jahangir 1909) Few other instances of same nature could be traced in Jahangir’s memoirs. However Jahangir did not had the blind faith in all the astrologers as he only mentions those instances and predictions that came true and explains each of his astrological belief with a reason.

### **Conclusion:**

Apparently Tuzk-i-Jahangiri is a mere autobiography of a mughal ruler and and historical account of his reign. But as we turn the pages of it we come across various fields of knowledge. These dimensions need to be explored and bring forward as students belonging to different subjects can benefit from them and add to their knowledge. The dimensions discussed in this paper are a part of his memoirs and carries scientific knowledge to some extent. Like wise their are other aspects of this book that are yet to be explored and given their proper place in their respective fields.

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