
UNIT 2 INDIC LITERARY TRADITIONS AND EUROPEAN SOURCES*

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- know the growth of Sanskrit language and literature under the 'Imperial' patronage,
- underline the emergence of Brajhasha as a prominent literary tradition,
- comprehend the evolution of Khariboli/Awadhi in the Awadh region and its major exponents, particularly the works of *Acharya* Tulsidas,
- understand the nature of 'Imperial' and 'Sub-Imperial' patronage received by Indic literary traditions,
- appreciate the commencement and birth of enumerable new literary *genres*,
- identify the importance of *mangal kavya* and *burunjis* and their key contributions to the understanding of the contemporary society and polity of eastern India and Assam,
- observe the significance of Jesuit accounts to understand the polity, society, and religious conflicts and contradictions prevailing during *Ibadatkhana* proceedings, and
- notice the commercial interests of the Europeans and their encounters with the Mughals.

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

The present Unit focusses on two distinct aspects of historical source material: one pertains to Indic literary tradition while the other deals with European sources. The Unit's focus is largely sixteenth century and source material beyond 1605 will not largely be the focus of the Unit.

We have devoted two Units that concern the development of Indic-literary traditions during the Mughal period. The 'Imperial' patronage given to Persian is kept out of the purview of both of these Units. The growth of Persian literary tradition is already discussed in **Unit 1**. The purpose of keeping two separate Units on Indic-literary tradition is a) In **Unit 2** our focus would be to discuss those texts that are 'historically' relevant and provide the 'key' information to enrich our historical understanding; b) In **Unit 18**, however, we would be discussing the general growth of the vernacular literary tradition and the patronage it received at the 'Imperial' (Mughal) and 'Sub-Imperial' (regional) level.

Vernacular literature, particularly *virgatha kavya* (heroic poetry) and *aitihāsik kavya* (historical poetry) were of utmost importance. For looking at the historical content of the period in vernacular literature one needs to look deep into the 'textures' of the text what Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Narayan Rao, and David Schulman have phrased it. You would find some panegyrics, some coated in poetic-heroism; while a few convey the factual details of the time.

One needs to keep in mind that literary works are not similar to that of a chronicle, you would find no emphasis on dates and chronology. Nonetheless, they represent the spirit and social climate of the time; throw light on genealogies, biographies, and cultural patterns of the period, etc. Thus, what Busch (2009: 25) argues, vernacular literature 'may be used with sensitivity as a window onto history'.

From the sixteenth century onwards another important element in the source material for South Asia gets added, that is, European travellers' accounts. We have already discussed in detail the coming of the Portuguese in Indian waters in our Course **BHIC 107**. Since our focus is sixteenth century, here, we would largely be discussing those European travellers who visited Akbar's court and their interactions and observations on the contemporary polity, economy, society, and above all their encounters with Indic religious traditions and Islam.

2.2 INDIC LITERARY TRADITION: IMPERIAL AND SUB-IMPERIAL TRANSMISSION

The importance of medieval Indic literary tradition lies in the fact that it served as a link between the local and the Imperial cultural traditions. It served to disseminate and understanding the Mughal court culture/Mughal rule from local perspectives.

2.2.1 Sanskrit Literature

In **Unit 1** we have discussed about translation project of Akbar's court. Therefore, Persian translations of Sanskrit texts are kept out of the scope of the present Section. You must have noticed the 'Imperial' translation project shows unique syncretism and assimilation of Indian and Islamic traditions where (in his introduction to the translation of *Mahabharata* [*Razmnama*]) Akbar is adorned with Hindu gods. Abul Fazl depicted Akbar as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Sanskrit intellectuals at Akbar's court were largely derived from among the Brahmans and the Jains. While Brahmans largely dissociated themselves with the court happenings; in contrast, Jains were very much affected with their surroundings and did write and commented on the parallel happenings of the time/court and also about the culture of the time. Jains did speak of historical events in their *kavyas* (poetry), *charitas* (biographies), and *prabandhas* (narrative poems) which may not necessarily be called a 'pure' historical writing, nonetheless, on certain aspects, they provide such crucial information which is otherwise not available in any so-called mainstream Persian historical writings. Audrey Truschke places Jain Sanskrit writings 'somewhere between accurate reporting and imaginative retelling'. The narratives of these Sanskrit texts centres around Indian kings, Mughal conquests, and even a Sanskrit translation of a portion of *Akbarnama* (*Sarvadeshavrittantasangraha*) is also attempted, probably the solo attempt of a Sanskrit translation of a Persian text.

Under Akbar's patronage, Shantichandra composed *Kripasakosha* (Treasury of Compassion) in c. 1587. Shantichandra elaborates on Akbar's ancestors, his birth, and childhood. He provides a graphic account of the urban landscape of Kabul. He locates Khorasan outside the landscape of India and associated this 'foreign land' with walnuts, dates, and horses. Interestingly, while he puts Babur and Humayun outside India, he emphasises upon Akbar solely responsible for Mughal expansion in the subcontinent. This is in sharp contrast to Jain scholar Rayamalla's writings (*Jambuswanicharita*) where he writes Babur becoming 'lord of Delhi' (*dillisa*). He even provides a vivid account of the Mughal army, particularly the takeover of Gujarat (1570-72). He frames Akbar's conquests as *digvijaya* (conquered all four directions). He even dedicated few verses to Akbar's Fathpur Sikri. He also praises Akbar's compassion (*kripa*). Shantichandra's work suggests the presence of Jain influence under Akbar. He suggests that many concessions were declared by Akbar under Jain influence, abolition of *jiziya*, consideration towards cows, etc. Shantichandra has even compared Akbar with great Jain-patron Chalukyan king Kumarapala. Shantichandra celebrates Jain successes in the Mughal court and himself presented as representative of his community *per se*.

Other Jain Sanskrit works that discuss Jain-Mughal relations are Padmasagar's *Jagadagurukavya* (1589), Jayasoma's *Mantrikaramchandravamshavali Prabandha* (1594), Devavimala's *Hirasaubhagya* (early seventeenth century), and Siddhichandra's *Bhanuchandraganicharita* (a work dedicated to Tapa Gachha leader Bhanuchandra during the reign of Akbar and Jahangir). Padmasagar's *Jagadagurukavya* (1589) is important to understand Mughal rise to power. He keeps Babur outside India (*Bharata*) and Humayun as the first Mughal king and Mughals as an Indian dynasty. It highlights the military exploits of Humayun and Akbar. It throws interesting light on Jain-Mughal conversations during *Ibadatkhana* proceedings. Padmasagara emphasises the fact that the security of the Kabul-Delhi route ensured economic prosperity to the Jain community. He also speaks of prosperity brought by Humayun in the regions of Malwa and Gujarat. Similarly, writing in 1596 Rudrakavi in his *Rashtraudhavamsamahakavya* mentions the clashes of Humayun with Bahadur Shah. However, one needs to be careful in taking the account at the face value. Rudrakavi here wrongly attributes the victory of Bahadur Shah. Jain texts incorporated Muslim rulers within the broad ambit of Indian rulers and do not describe Islam as distinct religious tradition. Devavimala includes in his *Hirasaubhagya* conversations/debates between Abul Fazl and

Hiravijaya on merits of Islam versus Jainism during his visit to Akbar's court during 1583-1585. It also hints at Abul Fazl's inclination towards Jainism. Devavimala's account throws light on Jain-Mughal relations, particularly important is Devavimala's discussion on Hiravijaya acquainting Jain precepts to Akbar. Jain sources record Akbar's conversations with Hiravijaya and Vijayasena (*Vijayaprashastimahakavya*) who asked these Jain scholars to explain the Jain idea of 'God', particularly to explain Brahman's allegations that Jains deny the existence of God which Hiravijaya and Vijayasena explain convincingly their idea of *Arihant* who was devoid of both form and attributes. Similarly, Siddhichandra in his *Bhanuchandraganicharita* applauds Abul Fazl's knowledge of Indian *Shastric* learnings.

Sanskrit sources are of great importance to know aspects of Mughal courtly life on which Persian sources are often silent. Jain scholar Krishnadasa wrote bilingual grammar *Parasiprakashya* (late sixteenth century). In this, he praised Akbar as *avatara* (incarnation) of Vishnu.

Allopanishad (Allah's *Upanishad*; a short text of ten verses) composed by an anonymous writer identifies 'Allah' as 'equipollent' with all Hindu deities. The text uses the phrase *Allahu Akbar* with an intended double meaning 6 'God is great' and 'Akbar is God'. Thus, the text is of extremely crucial to understand Akbar's religious worldview. It identifies Akbar as *rasul* (prophet). Interestingly, *Allopanishad* is discarded in Persian writings, is very much preserved in the Sanskrit copies of *Atharvaveda*.

Persian texts have equally ignored the Sanskrit titles granted to Jain/Brahman literati. It suggests the multi-cultural vibrancy of Akbar's court, which could only be known to us through surviving Sanskrit texts. *Bhanuchandraganicharita*, a biography of Jain scholar Bhanuchandra, written by Siddhichandra mentions that Akbar awarded him the title of *upadhyaya* on account of his intellectual feat. Hiravijaya, the leading Jain scholar was given the appellation *jagadguru* by Akbar. It came to be known to us through the two biographies of Hiravijaya (*Jagadgurukavya* and *Hirasaubhagya*). Similarly, the title *vyotirvitsarasa* conferred on Narsimha in 1600-1601 is known to us through the writings of Narsimha's son Raghunath through his *Muhurtamala*.

Interestingly, Akbar entrusted many Sanskrit titles to his Muslim nobles. Akbar adorned Abul Fazl with the title *dalalhabhana* (pillar of the army) on his acclaimed Deccan campaigns, something which is even ignored by Abul Fazl in his Persian chronicle, and we know about this only through Siddhichandra's biography of Bhanuchandra (*Bhanuchandraganicharita*). Similarly, Devavimala, another biographer of Bhanuchandra, in his *Hirasaubhagya* records that Akbar entrusted the title *savai* upon Vijayasena, a Sanskrit intellectual. Similarly, it records Akbar entrusting Padmasundara's books and establishing a Jain library to Hiravijaya.

Another important Jain scholar of Sanskrit who wrote extensively on Mughal court culture was Rudrakavi. He composed four major treatises *Danasahacharita* (1603), *Khanakhanacharita* (1609) *Jahangiracharita* (1610-1620), and *Kirtisamullasa* (1610-1620). He also composed a history of the Baglan dynasty in 1596. He wrote at the instruction of his patron Pratap Shah of the small principality of Baglana near Nashik which enjoyed autonomy until the 1630s, though brought by Akbar under his sway in the 1570s. Rudrakavi portrays Khan Khanan as a

powerful military general. It provides a detailed account from Baglana kingdom's perspective of the Mughal-Baglana clashes where Khan Khanan was sent to lead the command. It also shows the use of Rudrakavi by Pratap Shah as a diplomat to the court of Khan Khanan to negotiate. Rudrakavi's account highlights the power and influence of Khan Khanan. He also mentions the participation of Pratap Rudra in Akbar's Deccan campaigns (1602) against Ahmadnagar (Malik Ambar). Here, not only he narrates the power of Khan Khanan but also the participation of his sons Iraj and Darab in the campaigns whom he compares with two 'Kamdevas' battling against Shambara.

Thus, it is through Jain, Sanskrit, and other Indic literature that we come to know the vibrant presence of the Indic scholars in the Imperial entourage for which we have almost textual silence of the Persian literati.

Sanskrit inscriptions at Shatrunjaya, a Jain religious centres located in Gujarat also throws light on the vibrant presence of the Jains in the subcontinent during the sixteenth century. 1595 Sanskrit inscription in the Adishvara temple mentions the deeds of Hiravijaya and Vijayasena and their Mughal connections. It speaks of concessions Hiravijaya succeeded in getting from Akbar such as a ban on cow slaughter, abolition of *jiziya* and pilgrimage tax, the establishment of a Jain library, etc. Patan Sanskrit inscription records Akbar banning animal slaughter and prohibited fishing in the Gulf of Cambay. Mughal *farman* confirms the prohibition of fishing in a lake near Fathpur Sikri in the 1580s under Hiravijaya's (Jain) influence.

What is more important here is to understand various historical methods employed by Indian literati to express the political happenings of the period. In Bengal, Murari Gupta composed the poetic biography of Sri Chaitanya *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita* in Sanskrit which is valuable to understand the growth of Vaishnava movement under Sri Chaitanya.

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Differentiate between the writing styles of Sanskrit historical texts produced by the Brahmans and the Jains.

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- 2) Mention representation of Akbar in Shantichandra's historical writings.

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- 3) What is the importance of *Jagadagurukavya* as a historical treatise?

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2.2.2 Brajbhasha Literature

Riti (kavya) poets are more known for their *prashastis* (eulogies) compositions to the kings. Keshavadas' *Ratnabavani* (52 verses on Prince Ratnasena; probably commissioned by Madhukar Shah; circa 1570s-1580s) – centres around the Mughal takeover of Orchha – shows how Orchha became the tutelage of the Mughals from the perspective of the local Orchha people, what were their reactions and feelings. The text narrates the story of the valour of the hero of the text, Bundela ruler Ratansen, son of Madhukar Shah, on the battlefield against Akbar's forces. Keshavdas brings out the imminent surrender and defeat of Ratnasen before the Mughal might and the perplexity of Ratnasen to flee or die fighting, finally, Ratnasen dies fighting. His sacrifice, brave combat even bring admiration of Akbar. About Orchha's submission and the Mughal takeover in the Persian sources we hear of only Mughal perspective; here Keshav presents much different perspective than Mughal version; nowhere valour of Ratnasen and the resistance posed by the Orchha kingdom is highlighted. In this perspective *Ratnabavani's* importance as a source of history is immense. However, we have to be cautious about the corroboration of facts. Keshavdas does not mention Ratnasen's fight on behalf of the Mughals in their Bengal campaigns. Thus, local accounts throw light on, 'about the local ways of being historical and of being political in early modern India' (Busch 2009: 27).

Keshavdas' *Kavipriya* also throws light on Keshav's patron king Bundela Raja Indrajit, founding of the Orchha kingdom, Bundela genealogy, courtly culture and court happenings and his lively discussion on six *paturs* (courtesans) – Navrang Ray, Nayanbichitra, Tantarang, Rang Ray, Rangamurti, and Praveen Ray. Keshavdas's *Virasimhaddevacharita*, written in the poetry-history *genre* is another important work written in the court of Bir Singh Deo Bundela. It focuses on the deeds of Bir Singh Deo (r. 1505-1627).

Jahangirjaschandrika (Moonlight of the Fame of Jahangir, 1612), which was probably composed under the patronage of Rahim's son Iraj Shahnawaz Khan, written in *prasasti* (eulogy) format, Keshavdas compares Jahangir with kings Dilip and Sagara of the revered Raghu clan of Rama – an attempt to naturalise a Muslim ruler in the Indian setting, a trend which is quite visible in the Sanskrit inscriptions of the Turkish period (in Palam Baoli Sanskrit inscription dated 1276 Balban is mentioned as *Sri Hammir Gayasudin Nripati Samrat*).

Among the nobles of Akbar, Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan emerged as a great patron of art and literature, attracted scholars and literati across central Asia and Persia vis-à-vis Hindustan to his court. Khan-i Khanan was a rare mix of Persian and 'Hindi' intellect – a mixture of cosmopolitan and local tradition. We have already discussed in detail his *Maasir-i Rahimi*, a biographical account written by Abdul Baqi Nahawandi, a Hamadani in 1616. Nahawandi refers to the eulogies of Khan-i Khanan written by a number of Hindawi poets in *sabak-i Hindi* and he expressed his desire to deal with all of them in a separate section, that he could never do so. Thus there is almost silence on the nature of works produced by Hindawi literati in Khan-i Khanan's court. Keshavdas who finally joined the patronage in the Orchha court wrote *Jahangirjaschandrika* for Iraj Khan, son of Khan-i Khanan does contain verses in praise of Iraj Khan, Khan-i Khanan, and his father Bairam Khan.

Gang's (late 16th and early 17th century) almost seventy five *muktak* verses are full of praise of Mughal emperors and Mughal nobility – Akbar, Khan-i Khanan, etc. Gang has criticised Jahangir's act of condoning Zain Khan's act of cruelty of killing of Brahmans in the town of Eknaur.

The use of Brajified Persian in their literary texts indicates the Mughal influence. Busch appreciates the 'special linguistic flexibility' of Braj and to this mixing, she calls it 'Brajification' of Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and local words providing 'wonderful twists'. They were not concerned more about the purity of language, instead meant to serve local courts, at times patron soldiers/commanders.

2.2.3 Rajasthani Literature

Bardic literature of Rajasthan is a rich vernacular source to understand and politicise Akbar's personality from the perspective of the 'other'. *Rasos, kavyas, vanshavalis, khyat*, and *vat* are important historical literature available in various dialects of Rajasthan to construct the history of the period. In the bardic literature, Akbar is often addressed as *shriji, sah, nath, aspati* and *chhatrapati*, in contrast, Rajput chiefs were represented as *Hukumi Chakar*.

Among the biographies, one of the earliest such texts is *Dalpat Vilas* written sometime during 1579-1612. The focus of the text is Kunwar Dalpat Singh, son of Raja Rai Singh (r. 1571-1611) of Bikaner. The text is of crucial importance to understand the formative years of Mughal-Rajput relations. The text acquires special importance for the author himself was witness to most of the incidents/events. It highlights the personality of Akbar as a benevolent, kind-hearted at the same time courageous brave emperor in the battle of Panipat. It provides the detailed genealogy of the Rathors of Marwar and also touches upon the Rathor relations with the Surs, particularly Sher Shah Sur, though large portions cover Akbar's period. It informs that Kalyan Mal (r. 1539-1571) received from Sher Shah Bayana, Hissar, Rewari, and Mewat. It also speaks of Sher Shah's Kalinjar siege and his final demise suffered during the siege of Kalinjar. It also informs us of the succession clashes following Sher Shah and Islam Shah's death and the role of Hemu in the Sur polity along with details on the second battle of Panipat (1556). The text provides crucial information on Kalyan Mal-Bairam Khan relations. It was Kalyan Mal who welcomed Bairam Khan after he went into disfavour of Akbar. It presents a Rajput perspective of Akbar's visit to Nagaur in 1570 and Akbar's marriage with Rajput princes of Bikaner, nieces of Raja Kalyan Mal (Bhanumati, daughter of Bhimraj and Raj Kunwar, daughter of Kanhaji). It also records the grant of Jodhpur to Kalyan Mal which Rai Singh swapped with Merta. It indicated that it was not Akbar who took Jodhpur from him, instead, it was Rai Mal's own desire to swap to which Akbar agreed upon. It also highlights clashes and aspirations within the Marwar household, particularly tensions between Rai Singh and his brother Amra.

Another important contemporary bardic account is that of bard-poet Dursa Aadha. He is reported to have been the court poet of Akbar. He composed seventy-five verses in praise of Rana Pratap, his valour, his resistance against Akbar vis-à-vis Akbar's hidden respect towards Rana. However, to use them as historical text one needs to be careful for these are full of later interpolations. It nonetheless provides crucial information that the younger brother of the Rana, Sayat Singh, sided with the Mughals during the decisive battle against the Rana. Dursa also records that

the younger brother of Rana Udai Singh did join Akbar and fought against Rao Surtan of Sirohi from the side of the Mughals and sacrificed his life fighting for the Mughals. Akbar is often portrayed as an incarnation of Hindu pantheons Rama, Krishna, Laxmana by Dursa Aadha (*Git Akbar Badsah-ro* in *Dursa Aadha Granthavali*). Dursa Aadha even projected Akbar’s achievements to such an extent that even his success shook the throne of Lord Indra.

Mancharita of Amrit Rai (1585) and *Mancharita Raso* of Narottam (1594), biographies of Man Singh written in Rajasthan in Braj throw light on the activities of Man Singh in Akbar’s period. They highlight the Rajput political culture of the time. Another work of historical nature is the biography of Sujan Singh Hara (1554-1585), *Sujancharita* (1590), a Sanskrit *kavya*, written by Chandrashekhara, a court poet of the Haras.

2.2.4 Assam *Burunjis*

Burunjis (lit. a store that teaches the ignorant) are another important sources that are crucial to understanding the history of pre-colonial Assam. *Burunjis* began appearing in the sixteenth century and are largely written in prose. Initial *Burunjis* were penned down in Ahom dialect, while later they were composed in the Assamese. The earliest *Ahom Burunji* was written in the late sixteenth century. It records the events from the time of the invasion of the Ahom king Sukapha in the thirteenth century. It throws valuable light on the contemporary events, correspondences among the rulers (Ahoms, Jaintia, Kachari, and Tripuri), nature of taxes, reports, etc. *Assam Burunji* provides an account of the establishment of the Ahom kingdom upto the British occupation of Assam in 1826. *Deodhai Assam Burunji* largely discusses the Ahom history from the very establishment of the Ahom rule (568 CE). It is also important for it throws light on the aspects of Ahom society 6 Ahom royal wedding ceremonies, recreations, Ahom burial practices, etc. It also details the origin of the Koch, Jaintia, Chutia, and Nara kings. Another *burunji* of prime importance to understand Mughal-Assam relations is *Padshah Burunji*. It is in Assamese but unlike other *burunjis* full of Arabic and Persian terms. It throws valuable light on Babur, Humayun, Sher Shah, and Akbar. It also contains the career sketch of Raja Man Singh of Amber and Mughal clashes with Koch Bihar rulers. *Kachari Burunji* throws light on Ahom-Kachari relations. Similarly, *Jaintia Burunji* throws light on the kingdom of Jaintias. *Chutia Burunji* discusses the history of the Chutias from 1189 CE to its dismemberment in the sixteenth century.

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Discuss Keshavdas’ Ratnabavani as a historical source.
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- 2) What light *Dalpat Vilas* throw on the polity of Shar Shah and Akbar’s period?
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- 3) Discuss the importance of Rajasthani sources to understand the Mughal-Rajput relations.

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2.3 EUROPEAN TRAVELLERS' UNDERSTANDING OF MUGHAL INDIA

In the present Section, we would mainly be focussing on Jesuit accounts and the accounts of European travellers who visited Akbar's court. The chief motives of Jesuit missions were both politico-cum-religious and their missions remain primarily evangelical, while English travellers were primarily motivated to gain political favours to fulfil their commercial gains.

2.3.1 Jesuit Accounts

Early Jesuit Missions to the Court of Akbar

The earliest Jesuit-Mughal encounters began during Akbar's reign. Father Du Jarric (1566-1617) left behind a rich account of India in his *Histoire*. This could also be referred to as the 'earliest European description of the Mogul [Mughal] empire'. Du Jarric himself never visited India and his *Histoire* is mainly a compilation of Jesuit accounts. But Jarric's account particularly stands out for his faithful recording of the summaries, extracts, and abstracts of valuable letters of missionary fathers written prior to 1610 which are otherwise inaccessible. *Histoire* is a three-volume account and each consists of two Books. We are here mainly concerned with the first volume which deals with India down to 1599, the other two volumes deal with Africa and Japan. Prior to the 1600 account, Jarric's primary authority were Guzman's *Historia*, notes of Father Laertius, Lucena's life of St. Francis Xavier, and material supplied to him by Guerreiro, particularly the letters and Reports of the missionaries. 'Jarric used his authorities with fidelity, either literally translating, or carefully summarising' (Payne 1926: xxxviii).

Jarric's account is of great historical importance for it is based on personal observations and experiences. Further, Jesuit accounts may be regarded as 'earliest impression of European writers'. Jarric has reproduced accounts of the three Jesuits missions commissioned to the court of Akbar. The first Jesuit mission to Akbar's court was commissioned at Akbar's request under the leadership of Father Rudolf Aquaviva, along with Father Antoine de Monserrate and Father Francois Henriques. The mission reached Akbar's court at Fathpur in 1580. Though, much prior to the commissioned Jesuit mission as early as 1578 Portuguese Father Pierre Tauero was already present in Akbar's court. The second mission was commissioned under the leadership of Father Edward Leiton along with Christopher de Vega who attended Akbar's court at Lahore in 1591; while the third mission reached Akbar's court in 1595 at Lahore accompanied under the leadership of Father Hierosme Xavier Nauarrois, along with Father Emmanuel Pignero, and Brother Benoist Goes/de Gois.

Jesuits often accompanied Akbar on his campaigns, served as teachers of Akbar's sons. They were entrusted the position of proximity to Akbar during the court

proceedings. The Jesuit account is important for it was based on their personal observations. Jesuit accounts provide a rich commentary on the Mughal princes, nobles, and general living conditions of the people of Hindustan. Their insights on the administrative machinery of Akbar are valuable. Their descriptions of *wazirs*, nobles, *kotwal*, *qazis*, and eunuchs are valuable. Their descriptions on the law and punishment are extremely useful. Their account of the prevalent irrigational device *charas* for lifting water in the areas between Cambay to Lahore is insightful. Jesuit accounts are also crucial to know court etiquettes and court proceeds. Interesting facts are available in the Jesuit accounts about Jahangir's interests in European paintings as a prince who got a number of European paintings painted in his atelier. Detail accounts of Akbar's Deccan campaigns and his clashes with Malik Amber are also provided by the Jesuit fathers who were eye witness to the campaigns. Jesuit fathers, while accompanying Akbar from Lahore to Kashmir narrates a lively account of the kingdom Kashmir. Jesuits also speak of Akbar's inquisitive mind, particularly, his *gung* experiment. Missionary activities and Christian settlements at Agra and in other parts of Akbar's empire, particularly Lahore and Cambay throw interesting light on the liberal attitude of Akbar and Jahangir towards Christians and missionaries. Jesuit accounts also throw light on the open rivalry between the Jesuits and English merchant adventurer John Mildenhall, who visited Akbar's court in 1603. They left no stone unturned to obtain concessions for themselves and for their countrymen. Jesuit accounts also speak about Jahangir's rebellion, Akbar's illness, and finally circumstances leading to Jahangir's accession. Thus Jesuit account is of utmost importance to understand Akbar's period from the perspective of the 'other'. However, often their comments on the religious world view of Akbar are biased. Nonetheless, their observations on political events, literati, common masses, and nobles, etc. are of great value. Payne has rightly observed that in commissioning Jesuit missions Akbar intended to gain political advantages, to keep an eye on Portuguese settlements. Akbar was always vigilant and cautious of Portuguese settlements along the Mughal borders, particularly disturbing for him was the Portuguese advance towards the west coast which restricted Mughal access to the west coast ports. Payne (Du Jarric, 1926: xlvi) has rightly branded Portuguese as 'a very troublesome thorn in Akbar's side'. Further, we should also bear in mind that Jesuits were writing for their Christian readership in mind, where at the backdrop the idea of the superiority of the faith was dominant that the Jesuit accounts demonstrate well.

Father Monserrate

Father Antonio de Monserrate was a Jesuit missionary who accompanied the first Jesuit mission to Akbar's court along with Father Rudolf Aquaviva (leader of the mission) and their Persian interpreter Francisco Henrique. The first Jesuit mission arrived at Akbar's court in 1580.

Father Monserrate's account is a first-hand narration of his journey from Goa to Fathpur Sikri and thence his stay at the Mughal court. He provides a lively account of the cities of India. He praises Surat, its forts, garrisons, merchant activities, and ships of the port town. Monserrate is also full of praise for the fortifications of the cities of Mandu and Gwalior. Father Monserrate records that when he met Akbar he and his two sons adorned in Portuguese attire to honour their culture is suggestive of Akbar's deep respect and receptivity for other cultures. Monserrate provides details of the water supply system of Fathpur Sikri where a tank/dam was ordered to be constructed to fulfil the water needs of the town/palace. Monserrate is also

full of praise for the skilled artisans of the city of Agra. His account of the *Ibadatkhana* proceeds is exhaustive. Monserrate informs that Jesuit Fathers were asked by Akbar to be the teacher of his son Murad. Monserrate's account of the rebellions of 1580 in the regions of Bengal and Bihar is important for it presents the perspective of the 'others'. Father also narrates Christian encounter with the practice of *sati* and their reactions. Monserrate's account is valuable to understand Akbar's personality traits, his interests in hunting, his love to mix with common masses, his generosity, his courtesy and kindness to foreigners, his emphasis on imparting liberal education, judicial system, punishments, postal system, etc. Monserrate also adds to our knowledge the fineries of the administrative structure of the royal household and the court proceeds. His account of the process of the construction of Akbar's new capital Sikri suggests Akbar's interest in the capital building project. Father Monserrate also praises Akbar for particularly keen on ensuring the education of the royal princesses. His account on the working of Mughal mints is vital to understand the working of the Mughal coinage and control that the Mughal rulers applied on the overall working of the stability of the Mughal coinage. Thus, Father Monserrate's account suggests that not only was he a Jesuit missionary, he was also an energetic cosmographer. However, a few matters discussed and analysed by Monserrate one needs to be careful in taking the account at the face value, particularly his discussions on religious affairs, *Ibadatkhana* proceeds, and above all his understanding of the escheat system.

2.3.2 English Travellers

In contrast to the Portuguese and the Jesuits, British encounters with the Mughals began just at the very close of the sixteenth century. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, two English merchant adventurers visited Mughal empire: Ralph Fitch (1583-1591) and John Mildenhall (1599-1606). Mildenhall's account that survives is too brief and largely speaks of Mildenhall's clashes with the Jesuits at Agra and the Mughal court. In contrast, Ralph Fitch provides much more detailed observations of the Mughal environment. Thus, here we will be discussing the importance of Ralph Fitch's account.

In February 1583, much before the Charter of 1600, Newbery and his companions (John Elder, Ralph Fitch, and an expert in gems William Leeds) sailed from London on the ship, 'Tiger'. They reached Goa in 1585 and via Ujjain reached Agra and Later Fathpur Sikri in the very same year. At Fathpur Leeds joined Akbar's services, Newbery decided to make his way back home overland while Ralph Fitch embarked upon exploring Eastern India (Bengal) through a riverine route from Agra to Tanda (in Bengal) via Allahabad Banaras and Patna. From Tanda he marched further to Kuch Bihar thence again he sailed along the Ganges to Portuguese settlements at Hugli and thence to Chittagong and in 1586 he sailed for Pegu and Southeast Asia. He returned from Pegu to Bengal in 1588. This time on his way back to the home he decided to travel long the coast and reached Cochin, thence via Goa to Chaul, and then via Basra, Aleppo he reached back London in April 1591.

Ralph Fitch's observations on medieval Indian cities are noteworthy. Narrating about the vast expanse of Agra and Fathpur Sikri, Fitch compares it with London. He mentions the presence of twelve kilometre long market all along the distance between Agra and Fathpur Sikri. He provides lively discussion on the markets being filled with all sorts of skilled crafts and merchandise. Fitch narrates the presence of brisk trading activities between Agra and Tanda (Bengal) through the

riverine route. Fitch’s observations on the medieval society are also useful. Strangely he speaks of the presence of polygamy among Brahmans. Similarly, he speaks presence of child marriages in Indian society. He informs about the richness of cotton cloth and shashes (turban cloth) of the city of Banaras. He equally applauds the presence of brisk trading activities in cotton, sugar, and opium from Patna to the Bengal region. He also speaks about the presence of rich wildlife, particularly the tigers, along the route between Patna to Bengal. He also praises silk, musk, and cotton of the Kuch Bihar region. Fitch provides details on the medieval trade routes, riverine, coastal and inland routes, and also presence of towns and cities along the coasts and riverine routes, commodities of trade, richness and peculiarities of a particular town. He is full of praise for the presence of finest cotton in the markets of Sonargaon. He is full of praise of pearl fishery of Negapatan and pepper and cinnamon of Calicut His account of the cultivation of pepper in the region is quite detailed. He also speaks of cultivation of nutmeg and ginger in the region. The items of imports into India mentioned by him were largely precious stones of Pegu, musk from ‘Tartarie’. He praises the diamonds of Vijayanagara. He mentions that best pearls were from Behrain. However, like Pelsaert his narration of the houses, the living conditions of the common masses suggests the wide gulf between the lifestyle of the nobility and the masses. He informs that the common masses lived in houses built of straw with little furniture. He also provides the graphic account of the Nairs of the Kerala region.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) What is the importance of Du Jarric’s account as an important historical work to understand Akbar’s relations with the Jesuits?
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- 2) Who was Father Monserrate? Discuss his relations with Akbar.
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- 3) Analyse briefly Ralph Fitch’s observations on India.
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2.4 SUMMARY

The Unit focuses on the importance of Indic literature to understand the historical developments of India of Akbar’s time. To construct the history of the period historians have largely banked on Persian accounts 6 administrative orders and chroniclers’ accounts. Hardly any attention is paid to look into Indic literary sources to analyse the contemporary polity, society, and religious trends of the period. Indic literary accounts are of great value for they represent the perspective of the

‘other’. It is important to know that Indic literary texts attempted to assimilate Akbar, a Muslim monarch into Indic tradition and often they represented Akbar as an ‘Indian’ ruler and mentioned him as an *avatara* (incarnation) of Vishnu. Thus, Indic literary ‘textures’ attributed a Muslim monarch with ‘Hindu’ symbols. In this context Jain and Brahman Sanskrit texts are especially important and help us understand Akbar’s early forays from the perspective of the rulers whom Akbar subjugated; particularly important is Mughal-Orchha encounters described by Keshavdas in his Brajhasha text. Equally significant are *raso*, *khyat*, and *vat* literature from Rajasthan which are valuable to understand Mughal-Rajput relations. To understand the Mughal advances towards the northeast (Assam) *Burunji* literature throw a flood of light on Mughal-Assam relations vis-à-vis the local political formations.

During Akbar’s period, another *genre* of literature becomes available to us with the coming of the Europeans on Indian waters, particularly the Portuguese and the English. Thus Jesuits and English travellers’ visits enrich our understanding of the Mughal empire and Akbar’s court politics based on the observations of the European accounts. In this context Father Monserrate and Ralph Fitch’s accounts are valuable. Through their writings, one gets to know the European perspective of the Mughal empire.

2.5 KEYWORDS

<i>Charitas</i>	Biographies
<i>Farmans</i>	King’s royal order
<i>Kavyas</i>	Poetry
<i>Khyat</i>	Panegyric bardic accounts largely centres around historical personalities/rulers.
<i>Muktak</i>	Freestanding poems; a <i>muktak</i> is generally not part of a larger narrative
<i>Prabandhas</i>	Narrative poems; contain semi-historical anecdotal accounts of prominent personalities of the time
<i>Prashasti</i>	Euology
<i>Raso</i>	Heroic ballads;
<i>Riti (Kavya)</i>	Literally poetry of method; poetry in which primary concepts are defined and explained from the Sanskrit rhetoric (<i>rasa</i> [emotion]), <i>nayikabheda</i> (categories of female characters), <i>alankara</i> (figures of speech). Poets attempted to transform Sanskrit poetic <i>genres</i> into vernacular literary culture. In <i>riti</i> poetry there is emphatic emphasis on <i>shringara</i> (erotic poetry)
<i>Vamshavali</i>	Genealogies
<i>Vat</i>	Short oral narrative

2.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

1. See Sub-section 2.2.1
2. See Sub-section 2.2.1
3. See Sub-section 2.2.1

Check Your Progress-2

1. See Sub-section 2.2.2
2. See Sub-section 2.2.3
3. See Sub-section 2.2.3

Check Your Progress-2

1. See Sub-section 2.3.1
2. See Sub-section 2.3.1
3. See Sub-section 2.3.2

2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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2.8 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Historiography and Sources-3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y5eAdxPn3A>



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