Jahangir

Prince Salīm was the eldest son of the emperor Akbar, who early marked Salīm to succeed him. Impatient for power, however, Salīm revolted in 1599 while Akbar was engaged in the Deccan. Akbar on his deathbed confirmed Salīm as his successor. The new emperor chose the Persian name Jahāngīr (“World Seizer”) as his reign name.

Childhood & Early Life

He was born as Nur-ud-din Mohammad Salim on 31 August 1569 in Fatehpur Sikri to Mughal Emperor Akbar and his Rajput wife Mariam-uz-Zamani Begum (also known as Jodha Bai). He was the emperor’s much longed for son.

As the eldest surviving son of Akbar, he was named the successor quite early on in life. The emperor ensured that the prince received education from the best possible tutors.
Salim learned Persian, Turki, Arabic, Hindi, arithmetic, history, and geography among other subjects. He also developed an interest in composing verses.

The prince was also trained in civil and military administration and was placed in charge of a regiment of troops during the Kabul expedition of 1581. He was promoted to the rank of an army officer by 1585.

Salim grew impatient with time and revolted against Akbar in 1599. His attempt was unsuccessful and this incident created a rift between the father and son.

- Akbar died on 27 October 1605—some believe he was poisoned by Salim. A few days after his father’s death, Salim ascended the throne with the title of Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir Badshah Ghazi on 3 November 1605.
- He came to the throne at a time of great political chaos. There were several other contenders to the throne, and Jahangir was challenged by his own son, Prince Khusrau Mirza. Jahangir defeated the prince in 1606 and confined him in the fort of Agra. As punishment Khusrau Mirza was blinded.
- Jahangir continued with several of his father’s policies. Like Akbar, he too embarked on a series of military campaigns aimed at expanding the territories under Mughal rule. He successfully ended an ongoing war with the Rajput principality of Mewar, in 1614.
- In 1622, he sent his son, son Prince Khurram (later Shah Jahan), to fight against the combined forces of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda. Khurram emerged victorious following the conflicts and soon he challenged his own father for the
throne. Jahangir was able to subdue his rebellious son and retain power.

- Jahangir had a deep interest in matters relating to arts and culture. During his reign he encouraged artists and painters, and is credited to have played a leading role in the development of Mughal arts and culture. He also patronized European and Persian arts. The emperor was also known for his architectural works, the most famous work undertaken during his reign being the exquisite Shalimar Gardens in Kashmir.

- Jahangir, though notorious for the brutality he inflicted upon his own kin, was also known for his sense of fairness and justice, and his efforts for promoting administrative efficiency. He enacted several liberal decrees which showed his great concern for the welfare of his citizens, and installed the famous golden "chain of justice".

- Like Akbar, Jahangir’s rule was also characterized by religious tolerance. However, the Mughals developed hostile relations with the emerging clan of Sikhs led by the fifth Sikh guru, Arjan Dev. The guru had supported Jahangir's rebel son Khusrau Mirza which prompted Jahangir to order Arjan Dev’s execution. The guru was viciously tortured to death.

- The Mughal emperor was a complex person. Even though a successful ruler, he was infamous for his brutality. He was also addicted to alcohol, opium, and women. He has been criticized for giving his wife Nur Jahan too much power in the imperial court.

**Major Works**

- Jahangir is most famous for installing the golden "chain of justice” outside the castle of Agra. The chain, which was
attached to some bells, would ring the bells when pulled and summon the emperor. It was meant to be a link between the citizens and the emperor, and it was announced that any aggrieved person ringing the bells would be granted a personal audience with the emperor.

Personal Life & Legacy

- Jahangir was married several times. Some of his wives were Saliha Banu Begum, Khas Mahal Begum, Jagat Gosain Begum, Malika Shikar Begum, Sahib Jamal Begum, Malika Jahan Begum, Nur-un-Nissa Begam, Koka Kumari Begum, and Kanwal Rani Begum.
- His most prominent and powerful wife was Mehr-Un-Nisa or Nur Jahan, the widow of a rebel officer, Sher Afgan, of Mughals. He married her in 1611 and she went on to greatly influence the emperor during the later period of his reign.

Jahangir died of an illness on 7 November 1627. At the time of his death, he was traveling from Kashmir to Lahore. Jahangir was succeeded by his third son, Prince Khurram who took the title of Shah Jahan.

Main events of the reign of Jahangir:

1. Chain of justice:
The earliest measure of Jahangir was that a golden chain having 60 bells and weighing several ‘maunds’ was fastened between the Shahburj of Agra fort and a stone pillar raised on the banks of river Jamuna. People seeking justice were required to pull this chain in order to put forth their complaints or petitions to the King. This act speaks very high of Jahangir’s sense of justice but to what extent it proved helpful is not clearly known.
2. Issuance of 12 rules of conduct (‘Dastur-ul-Amal’):
Jahangir issued the following orders which demonstrate his concern for the welfare of the people:

1) He abolished the Tagma’ and “meerwahi” toll taxes and the taxes that the Subedars imposed on the people for their expenses.

2) He ordered for the construction of mosques, sarais, and wells on the road-sides which reduced the dangers from the thieves and dacoits.

3) He ordered that the property of the dead would be passed over to their legal heirs and the unclaimed property would go to the state, the income of which would be spent on public-welfare.

4) He banned the manufacture and sale of the intoxicants although he himself was addicted to drinking.

5) He disallowed the mutilation of the limbs of the criminals.

6) He ordered that the land-lords would not forcibly occupy the lands of the farmers.

7) He ordered for the construction of government hospitals and appointed the physicians (hakims) in them.

8) Animal slaughter was banned on two days in the week i.e. Thursday, his Coronation day, and Sunday, the day of his father and on certain other occasions in the year.

9) Akbar held Sunday with respect because it was the day of the sun. So Jahangir did like-wise.
(10) He reinstated all the mansabdars, appointed during Akbar’s reign, in their positions and promoted them on merit.

(11) The Jagirs, known as Aima and Madadgar, granted to the religious and charitable institutions were allowed to remain with them.

(12) All the convicts, serving for longer periods, were released from the jails.