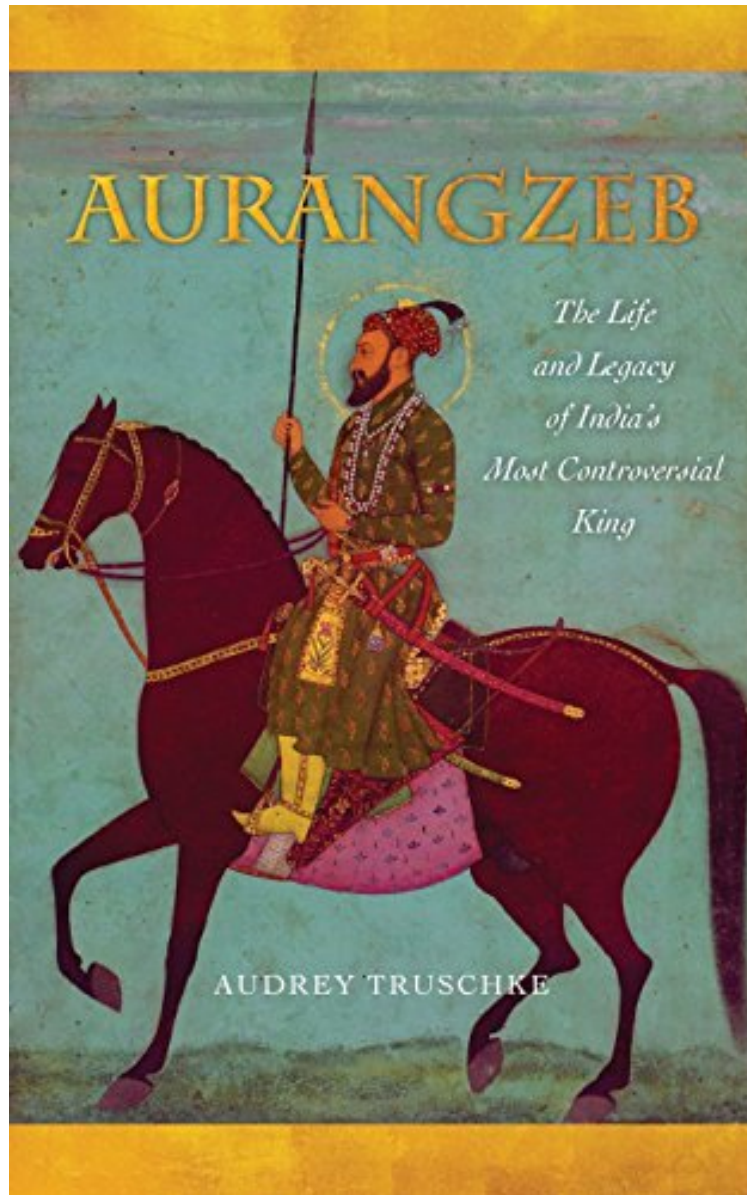


[Free] Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King

# Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King

*Audrey Truschke*

*audiobook / \*ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC*



DOWNLOAD



+

READ ONLINE

#70494 in Books Audrey Truschke 2017-05-16 Original language: English 8.00 x .38 x 5.00l, #File Name: 1503602575152 pages Aurangzeb The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King | File size: 20.Mb

**Audrey Truschke : Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King:

36 of 45 people found the following review helpful. A debatable, contrarian view by Dilip I casually followed the conversation on this book about Aurangzeb on social media but resisted the urge to read the book since I have little expert knowledge on the subject matter. Finally, I ended up giving in - call it impulse buying - and finished it in one sitting. This book is explicitly written as a counterpoint to the view that Aurangzeb's many controversial actions were motivated by his religious beliefs. It is meant for someone who is already familiar with the main elements of conventional scholarship and has followed the controversies around it. For someone looking for an introduction to the man and his legacy, this is not the appropriate work to start out with. Jadunath Sarkar's view is described as "overly communal" and that scholarship has since recognized this and moved away from it. Accordingly, various alternative explanations are put forth to explain his decisions; some suggested justifications - such as the practices and traditions that existed in Mughal imperial life even prior to his ascent to the throne - are perhaps factual whereas others appear speculative - how persuasive they are is somewhat subjective and in any case, I am not knowledgeable enough to critique the claim. Aurangzeb's killing of his brothers is attributed to a Central Asian practice that was practiced all through the Mughal dynasty where all male children had equal right to the throne and were expected to fight it out to death for it. The book states that he became pious only about a decade after ascending the throne and suggests that this may have something to do with either personal guilt about imprisoning his father and/or the refusal to acknowledge his legitimacy by prominent figures in the Muslim world at the time. Various actions curtailing music in the royal court, withdrawing patronage to painters, Sanskrit scholars etc. are attributed to it but argues that its impact was limited as other Mughal courts (of his sons and nobles) continued to patronize them and the affected individuals simply moved there to continue with their activity. Compositions from the 1690s-1705 suggest at least a scaling back of this policy as well. Tegh Bahadur's execution is attributed to his taking up arms against the Mughal state and his nephew having supported Dara Shukoh during the succession war. Another group, the Satnamis, who had taken up arms against the state were apparently also targeted by the Mughal state at around the same time. His opposition to the forcible conversion of Kashmiri brahmins is not elaborated in the earliest sources on the execution and its value debatable. The book makes the point that Hindu society was not monolithic and different segments supported or opposed Aurangzeb based on political considerations at different times. During the succession war, more Rajputs sided with Dara whereas more Marathas were with Aurangzeb. The Rajputs looked down on Shivaji as an "uncouth upstart" which is why Aurangzeb sent a Rajput, Jai Singh, to fight him. It claims that in the case of employment in higher administration too, Hindu numbers went up under Aurangzeb. Under Akbar, Hindus were 22.5% of nobles but between 1679-1707, that went up to 31.6% - still a minority but almost a third of the total. Regarding the most controversial aspect of the extent of temples destroyed/desecrated, she says that the total number destroyed is perhaps a few dozen at best and even there, quoting Richard Eaton, says "the evidence is almost always fragmentary, incomplete, or even contradictory". She quotes Richard Eaton approvingly that the total number is unknown and is not as useful as the particulars of individual (destructive) events. Some of his orders to destroy are acknowledged and he is stated to have overseen them. The numbers cited in the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* are regarded as an exaggeration. The one point that stood out was that theological justifications cannot account for why some but not others were destroyed/desecrated indicating that was not a sufficient justification for undertaking the task. The order of 1659 stating that ancient temples are not to be torn down but new ones are not to be built is said to be restricted to Benares because "plenty of Hindu temples were built elsewhere in Mughal India during Aurangzeb's reign" (no example or reference stated). Another order of 1672 recalling all endowed lands given to Hindus and reserving all such future land grants to Muslims might have been a concession to the ulama is stated to have likely gone unenforced throughout the empire except in select areas of the Punjab. Particular instances of land grants which contradict this stance are also mentioned. Yet, the question often raised when this is expressed is how significant were these? How many Hindu individuals/institutions received them in comparison to Muslims? Absent any quantitative estimate, it is unclear whether such grants would negate this general (discriminatory) rule or represent only a few exceptions to it. The author argues that unlike today, temples at the time were perceived as linked to political action and were therefore considered legitimate targets of punitive state action. It notes that some Hindu rulers also have historically attacked the patron temples of their (Hindu) enemies. An instance of political action associated with a place of worship cited is of Ajit Singh, ruler of Marwar destroying mosques built during the Mughal occupation of Jodhpur when he drove the imperial forces out. Again, while that may be true in principle, how important it was in practice can only be answered with numbers. How many such instances are to be found throughout Indian history and how does that number fare relative to the damage that Muslim rulers inflicted? The attack on Benares' Vishvanatha temple is stated to be retribution for its patrons being implicated in Shivaji's escape. Likewise, the desecration of Mathura's Keshava Deva temple was sponsored by Aurangzeb on account of the death of a Mughal commander and a patron of a major mosque in Mathura, during the Jat rebellion. Another explanation for the action against the Benares temple, as per Sadi Mustaq Khan, written in 1669 was as punishment for fraud, namely, that "deviant Brahmins" were cheating those who traveled great distance to learn from them by teaching "false books". The book also states that the emperor saw himself as an even-handed ruler of all Indians prompting him to extend state security to temples. Yet, it does not point out a single instance of him destroying/desecrating a mosque though evidence of persecution of eclectic Muslim groups such as the Ismailis for theological reasons is mentioned.

The Faatwa-i-Alamgiri is said to excuse certain punishments as a reward for converting to Islam but we also learn that no organized conversion campaign was run or supported by the state and the number who did so was limited. The main motivating factors were advancement in the administrative hierarchy and avoidance of jizya tax. The downside (unclear how impactful this actually was) is said to have been closer state scrutiny as the emperor was more concerned with the values and practices of the faithful. In conclusion, the author's case that Aurangzeb was a complex personality who was not defined solely by his religion is a reasonable one. It, however, does not take away from the fact that his actions and pronouncements were bigoted and religion played an important part in it. Facts brought out in the book indicate a willingness to temper those beliefs for pragmatic reasons. For a monarch ruling for 49 years wearing multiple hats as the defender of his faith and protector of the realm with supporters to be appeased, rivals to be accommodated, enemies to be vanquished or compelled into submission and other roles, such compromises to his principles are only to be expected. Inferences drawn contrary to conventional views appear somewhat speculative and while not implausible, nonetheless are not always more persuasive than better known positions. Thus, to what extent that alters one's judgement of the emperor is again subjective; to me, the answer is: not much.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Opinions, not always backed by facts and historical records

By Dhanesh Neelamana

The book is full of contradictions. And that makes the core thesis of the book weak. The author argues that Aurangzeb was not a religious bigot, but a king who was merely performing his "kingly" duties like expanding his empire and maintaining justice within his empire. Then keeping this as the core thesis she goes on to "bust" the various "myths" about the emperor. She tries to provide facts where she can and falls back to speculation when there are no facts in Aurangzeb's favor. You won't get a feel that the book is well researched because of the above mentioned reasons. I would recommend skipping this if you are looking for more facts and less opinions.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Extremely Balanced Narrative

By FH- Kolkata

Lucid and fluently written. Brings to light many facts that post-colonialist scholarship has ignored about Aurangzeb till date. It's a must read for any one who is tired of reading unverified usual bias against him. Effectively, Audrey does the following 1) Separate fact from fiction 2) Present Aurangzeb's faults as-is without the colored lenses of prejudice. This generation needs to understand Aurangzeb from a perspective other than the one propagated by Western scholars and this book successfully does that.

The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir is one of the most hated men in Indian history. Widely reviled as a religious fanatic who sought to violently oppress Hindus, he is even blamed by some for setting into motion conflicts that would result in the creation of a separate Muslim state in South Asia. In her lively overview of his life and influence, Audrey Truschke offers a clear-eyed perspective on the public debate over Aurangzeb and makes the case for why his often-maligned legacy deserves to be reassessed. Aurangzeb was arguably the most powerful and wealthiest ruler of his day. His nearly 50-year reign (1658-1707) had a profound influence on the political landscape of early modern India, and his legacy real and imagined continues to loom large in India and Pakistan today. Truschke evaluates Aurangzeb not by modern standards but according to the traditions and values of his own time, painting a picture of Aurangzeb as a complex figure whose relationship to Islam was dynamic, strategic, and sometimes contradictory. This book invites students of South Asian history and religion into the world of the Mughal Empire, framing the contemporary debate on Aurangzeb's impact and legacy in accessible and engaging terms.

Following British historians of the colonial era, Indian nationalists used the last and most controversial of the great Mughals in ways that simultaneously distorted Mughal history and served as a goad to Hindu cultural renewal. Audrey Truschke's project of looking at Emperor Aurangzeb afresh is thus a welcome and timely one and will interest readers in academia and beyond." (Barbara D. Metcalf, University of California Davis)

"Basing her judgments on a careful reading of contemporary Persian chronicles and European traveler accounts, Audrey Truschke presents a fresh, balanced, and much-needed survey of one of the most controversial figures in Indian history. Crucially, the author insists on evaluating the man in terms of the norms and traditions of his own day, and not those of later, more polarized times." (Richard M. Eaton University of Arizona)

About the Author Audrey Truschke is Assistant Professor of History at Rutgers University. She is the author of *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (2016).