



## JAHĀNĀRĀ BEGUM

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**JAHĀNĀRĀ BEGUM**, (1614-81) the eldest surviving daughter of the Mughal Emperor Šāh Jahān and his favorite wife, Momtāz Mahal, for whom Šāh Jahān commissioned the Tāj Mahal. Born in 1614, Jahānārā became the head of the imperial harem when her mother died in 1631, and she played a pivotal role in Mughal domestic politics throughout her life. Šāh Jahān favoured Jahānārā over his other daughters, just as he preferred Dārā Shekoh, one of Jahānārā's younger brothers, over his other surviving sons. Šāh Jahān granted her the titles: Sāḥebāt al-Zamāni (Lady of the Age), and Pādšāh Begum (Lady Emperor), and she repaid her father with her loyalty during the war of succession in 1657-58, when another of her brothers, Awrangzēb, seized the throne, executed Dārā Shekoh and another brother, and imprisoned Šāh Jahān in the Red Fort at Agra. Jahānārā cared for her father until his death in 1666 when Awrangzēb, despite her loyalty to her father and Dārā Shekoh, granted Jahānārā a sizeable stipend and allowed her to live in comfort for the remainder of her life, initially in Agra but also, evidently, in her father's newly constructed city of Šāh Jahānābād in Delhi.

Apart from her acknowledged role within the Mughal household, Jahānārā is known for sharing the dynasty's commitment to Sufism and for her patronage of buildings in and around Šāh Jahānābād. Although an adherent of the Qāderi Selsela, she revered members of the well-known Češti Order, and in 1640 wrote a biography of the Indian founder of the Order, Mo'in-al-Din Češti titled *Mo'nes al-arwāh*.

As is true of other Mughal princesses she is known to have written some



Persian verses and a few of her verse letters to Awrangzēb have survived, but she is best known for commissioning five building and garden projects in and around Šāh Jahānābād, rivalling perhaps the patronage of the famous Herati Timurid princess, Gowhar Šād (q.v.). Jahānārā's projects included a typical royal Muslim architectural complex: a mosque, a public bath and a caravanserai. However, she is most famous for her construction of the bazaar known as Chandni Chauk, which was bisected by the "Paradise Canal." This bazaar quickly became Delhi's principal commercial center, and it still functions as a major commercial artery in Old Delhi. In addition, Jahānārā continued the well-established Timurid-Mughal patronage of Persian gardens (see [GARDEN III](#); [ČAHĀRBĀĠ](#)), by commissioning a *čahārbāġ* adjacent to the bazaar, which was reserved, however, for imperial women and children.

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