

# The Mughal Jagirdari and Mansabdari System

## Mughal Jagirdari System

The system of assignment of revenue of a particular territory to the nobles for their services to the state continued under the Mughals also. Under the Mughals, the areas assigned were generally called Jagir and its holders Jagirdars.

### THE JAGIRDARI SYSTEM

- All the Mughal *mansabdars* were paid through an assignment of *jagirs*.
- These jagirs can be linked to the Delhi Sultan's Iqta system where the Sultans parcelled out their territories to be administered by their nobles and the state officials.
- These officials were responsible for maintaining law and order and collection of land revenue.
- After meeting the necessary expenses the *iqtadars* used to send the surplus revenue to the central treasury.

The Jagirdari system was an integral part of the mansabdari system which developed under Akbar and underwent certain changes during the reign of his successors. During Akbar's period all the territory was broadly divided into two: Khalisa(Crown Land) and Jagir(Land Assignments).

### **THE JAGIRDARI...**

- The jagir assignments initiated by Akbar, however, only gave the right to collect revenues to the *mansabdars*.
- They were not responsible to maintain law and order or any other responsibilities.
- It was a purely fiscal arrangement and only Rajput *mansabdars* were given more extensive rights of residence within their own homeland (Rajputana).
- They received patrimonial (Mughal term: *watan*) lands as a part of the *jagirs* assigned to them.

The revenue from the first went to imperial treasury, and that from Jagir was assigned to Jagirdars in lieu of their cash salary. Salary entitlements of mansabdars were calculated on the basis of their *Zat* and *Sawar* ranks.

### **THE MANSABDARI...**

- All Mughal officials received a dual rank when they joined the Mughal imperial service. That was *zat* (personal salary) and *sawar* (payment for the military contingent). For example the *mansab* of Prince Salim (Jahangir) was 5000 *zat*/5000 *sawar*. What does it mean: Prince Salim's personal salary was based on his *mansab* of 5000 *zat* and for 5000 *sawar*, he had to maintain a military contingent.

The salary was paid either in cash (in that case they were called *Naqdi*) or through the assignment of a Jagir, the latter being the preferable mode.

In case the payment was made through the assignment of a Jagir, the office of the central Diwan would identify parganas the sum total of whose *Jama* was equal to the salary claim of the mansabdars.

In case the recorded *Jama* was in excess of salary claim the assignee was required to deposit

the balance with the central treasury.

On the other hand, if it was less than the salary claim the shortfall was paid from the treasury. However, none of the assignments was permanent or hereditary. The Emperor could shift part or the entire Jagir from one part of the imperial territory to another at any time.

The ratio between Jagir and Khalisa kept fluctuating during the Mughal rule. During Akbar's period Khalisa was only 5% of total revenue, under Jahangir it was 10%, under Shahjahan it fluctuated between 9-14%.

### CHANGES IN THE *MANSABDARI*

- After the reign of Akbar when the highest ranking mansabdars who had reached the maximum limit in their mansab had nothing to aspire for.
- For this reason there were some changes in the *mansabdari* system.
- The quota of the contingent which each *mansabdar* had to maintain was lowered and there were further reductions in the contingent if the *mansabdars* were posted on the frontiers or far away places.

In the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign there was great pressure on the Khalisa as the number of claimants for Jagir increased with the increase in the number of mansabdars. The jagirdars were also transferred from one Jagir to another (but in certain cases they were allowed to keep their Jagir in one locality for a longer period of time).

The system of transfer checked the Jagirdars from developing local roots. At the same time, its disadvantage was that it discouraged the Jagirdars from taking long term measures for the development of their areas.

#### **What were the types of JAGIRS ?**

There were various types of Jagirs.

1. Tankha Jagirs were given in lieu of salaries,
2. Mashrut Jagirs were given on certain conditions,
3. Watan Jagirs were assigned to Zamindar or rajas in their local dominions.
4. Altamgha Jagirs were given to Muslim nobles in their family towns or place of birth.

*Tankha Jagirs* were transferable every three to four years.

*Watan Jagirs* were hereditary and non transferable. When a Zamindar was made a mansabdar,

he was given Tankha Jagir apart from his watan Jagir at another place, if the salary of his rank was more than the income from his watan Jagir.

The Jagirdars were allowed to collect only authorized revenue in accordance with the imperial regulations. The jagirdars employed their own officials like 'AMIL' etc. The imperial office kept watch on the Jagirdars.

The Diwan of the suba was supposed to prevent the oppression of the peasants by the Jagirdars.

Amin was posted in each suba to see that Jagirdars were following imperial regulations.

Faujdar used to help the Jagirdars if they faced any difficulty in the collection of revenue.

### **Changes in Mansabdari System**

Jahangir and Shah Jahan introduced new systems into the original mansabdari system of Akbar. While the system introduced by *Jahangir* was called **du-aspah sih-aspah**, the one brought out by *Shah Jahan* was the **month-ratio** or **month-scale system**.

(i) Du-aspah sih-aspah system The term du-aspah sih-aspah literally means trooper with two or three horses. Under this system, selected nobles could be allowed to maintain a large quota of soldiers, without making any change in their Jat rank. It implied that a mansabdar or noble holding du-aspah sih-aspah rank had to maintain double the quota of troopers indicated by his sawar rank. They were paid accordingly.

(ii) Month-ratio or Month-scale system It was a new scaling device under which the salaries of mansabdars were put on a month scale: ten months, eight months, six months or even less. The obligations of the mansabdars for maintaining a quota of sawars were brought down accordingly. The month-scale system was applied to both jagirs and those who were paid in cash.

The Mansabdari system was not without defects. As the soldiers were recruited and paid by the mansabdars, their loyalty and attachment were to their immediate master rather than to the emperor. This gap between the emperor and the bulk of his army was a source of serious danger to the government. Following is the brief description of Mughal Administration system to understand about the Merits and Demerits of Mansabdari system in a better way.

# Local Administration

- Subah divided into sarkars. Sarkars divided into Paraganas. Paraganas into villages.
- District governed by a shiqdar or a faujdar
- Amalguzar: head of revenue administration (aka Krori)
  - Revenue collectors were under orders not to oppress the cultivators while collecting the state demands
- Other officers
  - Bitikchi: record keeper of land revenue
  - Khazandar: treasury officer
- Sarkar divided into paraganas (tehsils)
  - Tehsils had a batch of subordinate officers
  - Shiqdar, amil, fotdar and qanungo
- Each tehsil had about 12 villages
- Villages were the lowest units of administration
  - Mughals gave legal sanction to the panchayats
  - Patwari and Chaukidar

# Features

- Mughals imported certain foreign elements into their administrative system
  - Perso-Arabic system in the Indian setting.
- Based on the military system: Mansabs
- Centralized despotism
- Blend of religion and politics existed
- Paper administration: growth of official records
- Aim: police duties and revenue collection
- System of public corporations
- Administration of justice largely left to local administration
- Villages and small towns enjoyed 'parochial' self-government rather than local autonomy. They had no political freedom

# Evaluation of the Mansabdari System

- Merits
  - A systematic and progressive system to reorganise the army within the fold of despotic monarchy
  - First such system in India
  - Improvement over the system of tribal chieftainship and feudalism
  - Offices were not hereditary
  - Every mansabdar was held personally responsible to the monarch
    - This eliminated all chances of dis-affection and revolts by the military officers

- Demerits
  - This system did not give birth to a national army
    - About 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the mansabdars were either foreigners or the immediate descendents of the foreign immigrants
  - Non-regimentation of the army
  - Hesitation on the part of the imperial govt to recruit all the soldiers of the mansabdars
  - No uniform rules were prescribed for systematic training of the soldiers
  - The nature and the quality of the war weapons borne by them differed from contingent to contingent