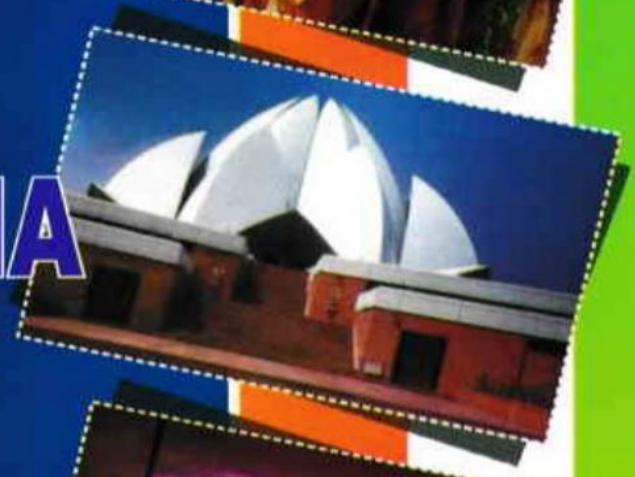

ENCYCLOPAEDIA of INDIAN History

• LAND • PEOPLE • CULTURE & CIVILIZATION

Dr. Anil Saxena

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF INDIAN HISTORY

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MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION

Anil Saxena

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About the Author

Dr. Anil Saxena, an eminent scholar, sociologist and historian in his own right, is totally committed to research and writing. An academic to the core, he is M.A., Ph.D., D.Lit., and currently a senior faculty member in Agra University. He has devoted his entire career to serious studies. This multi-volume work is the result of his painstaking efforts, as the head of a team of scholars and researchers, for several years together. This is his third work with a couple of books in press.

About the Book

Indian history is one of the most ancient histories of the world in terms of human civilization. Here flourished many cultures, civilizations, religions and particularly spirituality. That is the reason why India is called the homeland of rishis, munis, saints and faqirs. It is also the only nation on the earth, which accommodates varieties of people and culture seven to date. This miraculous harmony and unity in diversity stands India apart from the rest of the world. Spirituality aside, Indian land can also be boasted of producing giants of literature, science and technology. Rich in minerals, beauty of landscape and other geographical features have always attracted foreign attention since the very early times. As a result, consecutive attacks by armies, and a long period of foreign occupation. Present modest work, consisting of thirty volumes, namely, Encyclopaedia of Indian History is holistic in approach. It covers exhaustively and extensively a wide range of aspects of Indian history, particularly, land, people, culture and civilization. Definitely, the work would prove to be a veritable mine of information among all quarters of its concern.

Contents

Preface

India is a great country, which boasts of a rich history, richer than many a nation in the world. It's history is vast and illustrious by all counts. The term 'India' finds its origin in the 'Indus Valley Civilisation' that flourished on the banks of the river Indus. The history of India is one of the most interesting and enlightening ones in the midst of a plethora of world histories. For the purpose of ease, it can broadly be divided into three distinct periods, namely; Ancient Period, Medieval Period and the Modem Period.

The first period, *i.e.,* the Ancient Period begins several centuries before Christs' birth and extends to around 1000 A.D. The period boasts of great kings like Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, Chandragupta Vikramaditya and Harsha. The second period, i.e., the Medieval Period starts with the expeditions of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni to India. Earlier, in 712, Muhammad bin Qasim had conqured Sindh, which became a province of Omayyad Caliphate. Thereafter, a chain of rulers from different dynasties, such as Slave dynasty, Khilji dynasty, Tughlaq dynasty, Sayyid dynasty, Lodi dynasty and Mughal dynasty, reigned over the country. All these monarchs ruled over a vast empire, spanned over, the sub-continent and enjoyed this country's rich and opulant resources. The last of these dynasties, the Mughals, whose period ranges from 1526 to 1857, left the most indelible marks of their grandeur and splendid life-style after them. Hindu-Muslim Culture, Urdu, Red Fort, Taj Mahal and Delhi's Jama Masjid are the symbols, to name a few.

The third Period, i.e., the Modem Period starts from the Portuguese attacks in the 15th century. The formation of East India Company in 1600, through a charter signed by Queen Elizabeth I, which granted permission to trade with India gave a new turn to contemporary history. Though, the company had to

face tough resistance from the Dutch and French. However, the British company succeeded in destabilising them and soon the company's business operations expanded into political ambitions. After being remained under the British rule for almost one hundred years, Indians made a brave effort to turn them upside down. In 1857, the first-ever large-scale revolt took place which shook the British at least for some time. Within a month of the capture of Delhi, the revolt spread like a wild-fire to different parts of the country. The most important element in the occurrence of the Revolt was Hindu-Muslim unity. People exhibited patriotic sentiments, without a touch of communal feelings. All revolutionaries, unanimously recognized Bahadur Shah Zafar as India's emperor. Begun as a mutiny of soldiers, it, soon, turned into a big revolt. Unfortunately, the great revolt, known as the first freedom struggle, failed due to certain reasons. But, it sowed a seed, which later flourished into a strong tree. During a second phase of slavery, spanning over ninety year, a popular freedom movement came up under Mahatma Gandhi and Congress. At last goddess of freedom smiled, the British yoke was lifted and India's independence was declared on 15 August 1947.

The devoted works of a generation of scholars have thrown a flood of light upon the subject. But the results of their research have been chiefly intended for the specialists or are limited to some specific aspects of the vast subject—Indian History. Today, when India is on the path of rapid progress in diverse fields of life, it becomes all the more important for all of us to explain to the world through a comprehensive and a realistic account of its past grandeur and the status, it enjoyed. It will be an injustice to belittle or ignore any aspect, whatsoever, while producing a grand work on a grand subject. This modest, exclusive, comprehensive and multi-volume series of books, namely, *Encyclopaedia of Indian History, Culture and Civilisation,* fulfills

that very aim. It consists of thirty books—each being an independent entity, with a separate title.

This book is titled: ***Mughal Administration.***

The targeted readership of this voluminous and splendid work comprises one and all belonging to elitists' group or scholars and as well as the rank and file—researchers and students. It hopefully, would quench everyone's thirst upto a saturation point. Nevertheless, all positive remarks and responsive suggestions are bound to help us enhance its usefulness to great academic standerds.

— Editors

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Secular Administration

As sovereign monarchs, the Mughal emperors ruled without any effective check on their authority. In theory they were only servants of the law, the Muslim law. They could neither supersede it nor modify it. But in actual practice this was true of the personal law of the Muslims alone.

Secular Attitude

The Mughal emperors did not really claim the right to decide the religious beliefs of the Muslims. The law and practical attitude towards the Hindus has already been mentioned. The administrative organisation was recognised in practice as lying beyond the jurisdiction of the Qazis. Even in countries like Persia, Afghanistan, or Egypt, where almost the entire population had been converted to Islam, the Muslim rulers had felt it necessary to incorporate pre-Muslim customs in the organisation of the government.

In India, where the preponderant bulk of the population refused to accept Islam, it was all the more difficult to organise government according to the Muslim law. The rulers exercised greater liberty in the organisation of the government. They acknowledged themselves as the agents of Islam, interested in its spread among the non-Muslims and in securing conformity

to orthodox practices among the Muslims. In return, the theologians usually left them alone in the organisation of government. The practices of the first four Caliphs were exalted by the Muslim jurists as the Muslim policy. But the Shiahs differed violently from this view. Thus a good deal of latitude was left to the Muslim rulers in the organisation of the government. Most of the Mughal emperors, therefore, felt themselves at liberty to order things as they pleased provided what they did was not actually opposed to the Quran.

The Mughal emperors assumed titles which placed their authority far beyond the reach of the jurists. Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, all claimed to be the 'shadow of God', 'Vakil' (agent) of God on Earth, 'Khalifa (deputy of the prophet) of their age and country'. This did not, however, amount to the assertion that there was a 'divinity hedging round the crown', much less did this assert the divine right of kings which the contemporary Stuarts were proclaiming in England. It was as successful agents for the spread of Islam that the Mughal emperors could claim to be the 'shadow of God on Earth'. Akbar did not claim the authority to do what he liked; he simply asserted that his innovations should not be condemned unless they were contrary to the Quran. Thus the Quran was recognised in theory at least as the fundamental law of the State.

This should have tempered Mughal despotism and rendered it a 'limited monarchy'. It failed to do so because there was no institution in the Mughal State capable of effectively compelling the Mughal rulers to hold their hands if they ever transgressed the law. Twice under the Mughal emperors the theologians found themselves in opposition to their rulers. When Akbar changed the religious policy of the State and intended making the law of heresy and the discriminative code against the Hindus inoperative, Abdun Nabi, his Sadr, opposed it and incurred his displeasure. He lost in the end and his successor lost many of his powers. Shah Jahan's Chief Qazi refused to

proclaim Aurangzeb as Shah Jahan's successor when Shah Jahan was still alive. Here was Islamic polity working as the fundamental law of the Mughal State. But the resemblance is only superficial. The Qazi was appointed by the emperor and held office during his pleasure. Aurangzeb removed the inconvenient Qazi and found another, who declared that Aurangzeb was exercising royal power because his father Shah Jahan was incapacitated from acting, presumably because Aurangzeb had imprisoned him. Thus, the authority of theologians failed to make a limited monarchy of the Mughal government. It remained a despotism.

But if the Quran formed the fundamental law of the Mughal State it may be argued that it was a theocracy. A theocracy without an independent religious head is impossible. It is further necessary that the authority of such a theologian should be recognised without dispute by the vast bulk of the population. The Mughal government lacked such an office. The Mughal government was no more a theocracy than the government of George n in Ireland.

The Mughal government was then a despotism but of a peculiar brand. Its absolute authority was never so interpreted by its rulers. Theoretically, and to a large extent in practice, the judiciary was independent. Administration of justice through Hindu Panchayats and Qazis' courts owed nothing to the king though he made provisions for the maintenance of the Qazis. The Mughal rulers made few laws of their own and did not claim the right to do so.

Role of Emperor

There does not seem to have been any generally accepted law of succession. Dominion was not even supposed to run in the house of Babur alone. Mahdi Khwaja was Babur's son-in-

law. Claim to the throne does not seem to have been confined to the sons of the last ruler. Khusrau, Akbar's grandson, was a hot favourite for the throne when Akbar lay dying.

Nomination by the reigning monarch did not have much effect. Babur's Prime Minister, Mir Khalifa, knew Babur's wishes when he was trying to supplant Humayun. At Jahangir's death, his nominee, Shahryar, was quietly passed over. Aurangzeb's rebellion against Shah Jahan challenged the right of the reigning monarch both to nominate a successor and to take steps that his nominee should succeed him.

The eldest son does not seem to have possessed any incontestable claim. Aurangzeb was not Shah Jahan's eldest son. Shah Jahan had become the eldest only after having Khusrau murdered. The empire was not considered an indivisible entity. Babur's kingdom was inherited by Kamran and Humayun. Humayun's dominion was divided between Hakim and Akbar. Aurangzeb intended a fourfold division of the country.

As the new ruler took his seat on the throne, the court would resound with the cries of 'Badshah Salamat', proclaiming to the rest of the country that a new king had ascended the throne. The new monarch announced a breach with his nonroyal past by taking a title—a Salim would blossom forth into a Jahangir, a Khurram in to a Shah Jahan. Presents would then be offered to the new king. A design for the new coins would be selected and a verse to adorn them chosen. The popular proclamation would come on the Friday following the accession. Before the Muslims assembled for the Friday prayers, the Imam would start by reading the Khutba. This would include prayers, among others, for the reigning monarch. The new monarch's name would now be added to the list.

The emperor was the fountain of all honours, source of all administrative power and the dispenser of supreme justice. These were not empty phrases. He summoned a few of his

highest officers inside his private apartments to discuss necessary business with them. Once a week or more often he held a court of justice. To these might be added the king's appearance in a balcony early in the morning when he received such complaints and demands for redress as his subjects chose to present to him.

The emperors came to the salutation balcony at sunrise soon after their morning devotions. Most imperial palaces had a special window—*Jharokha*— assigned for the purpose. This would overlook a spaciops court where not only a large number of people could get together for *Darshan,* but where a review of troops could also be held.

This done, the emperor felt himself free to receive petitions. Badauni's complaints about the 'low people' assembling here in Akbar's time suggest that the institution worked effectively under Akbar. Under Jahangir we find admission to the enclosure jealously guarded by officials. Shah Japan complained that he could not obtain even twenty petitions daily.

At noon the emperor viewed from here elephant fights held twice a week; lions fought buffaloes, leopards killed deers, jugglers performed their tricks to amuse the emperor.

The *Jharokha Darshan* thus mainly served as a means of proclaiming the king's presence amidst his subjects.

The king next appeared in the *Diwan-i-Am.* Shah Jahan came to it straight from the *Jharokha.* Aurangzeb appeared . twice here, in the forenoon and the afternoon. Akbar seems to have held it in the afternoon. The morning sessions under Shah Jahan were devoted to the inspection of workshops and stables; and public business proper seems to have been done in the afternoon only. Aurangzeb held two public sessions for some years only and confined himself to one afternoon session later on.

It was not a Durbar as we understand the term today— a place for formal audience and amusement of the king. It did not

provide any *Tamasha.* It was the king-in-court transacting State business in public. It was an assembly of officials presided over by the king.

Group of Officers

The court had a set of officers. The Mir-i-Tuzak acted as the chief secretary. The imperial news-writer daily attended the court, with two reporters. The Superintendent of the Royal Post was present with a staff of royal messengers. The Chief Huntsman, the Superintendent of the Royal camp, the Superintendent of the Imperial Bodyguard and Superintendent of the Guard were always in attendance upon the king.

The business of the day began with the reading of the previous day's orders. They were confirmed and then sent to various departments for proper action. After this the *Diwan* or the *Bakhshi* read extracts from the official letters they had received from provincial governors, district officers, commanders of garrison towns, and collectors of customs. The emperor would listen attentively and; where needed, issue orders promptly. Some of the high officers in the court would then submit the requests of the State servants serving in the mufassil from the private letters received by them.

The emperor would pause a little for deliberation and then announce his orders, usually calling for a report from the *Diwan,* the *Bakhshi* or the *Khan-i-saman.* Sometimes the applicant was told to approach his immediate superiors. The imperial news-writer would also read extracts from the reports sent by his subordinates from different parts of the country. The Superintendent of various workshops or keepers of royal stores would also make reports and submit their demands. Royal messengers sent out by the emperor for bringing reports from

local officials submitted them* here. Royal Commissioners appointed to make investigation locally submitted their reports.

Appointments of all the *mansabdars* were made here; questions of their promotion, demotion and dismissal, the grant of jagirs to them in lieu of salary, posting them to various jobs—all required the sanction of the emperor which was granted in the durbar. Usually the governors, faujdars and garrison commanders had direct access to the imperial court with regard to the matters in which they were concerned. The provincial revenue officials, however, had to submit all their reports to the imperial diwan who then presented the papers with his own recommendations. Even the under diwans at the capital were required to submit their papers through the imperial diwan who read the appropriate portions with the suggestions in the open court.

Ambassadors, distinguished visitors, defeated rebels, vanquished rulers and their representatives were all received in the durbar bringing their presents with them. Here, again, were honours conferred on them, presents given and the terms to be granted to them announced.

The great officers of the State sent to the provinces took their leave of the emperor and received his parting instructions; successful commanders returning from their expeditions were honoured by being received in the open court, sometimes even with their retinues.

On festive occasions, the emperor received the presents of his mansabdars, present and absent. He also announced his own gifts to them. The king's birthdays, the lunar, and till Aurangzeb's reign, the solar New Year's Days, the *Ids* and the *Dusserah* were thus celebrated with great eclat.

Two secretaries belonging to the imperial news-writers' department were on duty every day by turn. Everything said or done in the court was recorded.

The department of the *Khan-i-Saman* made heavy demands on the emperor's time in the court. Superintendents in charge of various workshops had to be guided by the imperial taste. Thus, all questions concerning workshops, buildings, roads, tents, gardens, imperial sport or amusements, were decided here.

The *Ghusal Khana* was a retiring place for doing important work and holding important consultations where only the highly placed officials of the king were admitted. The commanders of expeditions about to leave, governors proceeding on their appointments were sometimes called to hold confidential consultations with the emperor here. Admission was regulated by permits. A Superintendent of the *Ghusal Khana* secured the observance of its rule of etiquette. Under Shah Jahan, at least, if an official was held guilty of an offence against decorum in the *Ghusal Khana* he was not allowed to leave till he had paid the fine imposed on him.

It was an unceremonial gathering. Jahangir would interrupt its proceedings by taking his usual cups of wine here. Akbar discussed religious questions here. The emperor sat either on a throne, a chair or on the rich carpet specially spread for him. All members present were allowed to sit.

The *Khilwat Khana* was any place where the emperor decided to hold confidential consultations in privacy. The Diwan and the Bakhshi were almost always present. Other officers concerned could be summoned if the emperor so desired.

Every Wednesday the *Diwan-i-Am-o-Khas* would be converted into a court of justice. The Superintendent of the Court presented the aggrieved persons, probably explaining in each case their grievances. The emperor would then do justice as he thought fit.

The rest of the time of the emperor was spent in the harem, or at prayers, in sleep, or in amusements.

It is necessary to remember that the Mughal emperor seldom missed attendance at one or another of these administrative conferences. As long as this continued, all went well with the empire. No fool could afford to be in the company of such a large number of highly placed officials without learning something from them. No one who was a fool could fail to be discovered as one by such discerning persons.

The Mughal Emperor thus formed the pivot on. which the entire administration turned. In camp or in the palaces, well or ill, he never neglected business and thus always played an important part in the administration of the country. He presided over it, inspired its activities, and very largely he determined its character.

Role of High Officials

No absolute ruler, however diligent, can discharge all the duties of the government at the centre, alone. He must have round him persons to whom ha can entrust his commissions, who act as his eyes and ears, and spare him a lot of detailed work. Under the early Mughals, Babur had Mahdi Khvaja as his Prime Minister and Zain-ud-din as his Sadr. Humayun does not seem to have appointed any one to a position higher than that of a secretary; on his return from Persia Bairam Khan occupied an exceptional position in the State, but more as a great commander than as a high administrator.

During Akbar's minority Bairam Khan acted as his regent (Vakil), discharging all the functions of the head of the State in Akbar's name. When Bairam Khan fell, the faction that had brought about his fall could not expect to step into his shoes. Though first Maham Anaga and then Munim Khan continued to guide Akbar's administration they occupied the position of the power behind the throne. Munim Khan could not issue orders

on his own without at least making the pretence of consulting his young sovereign.

The Reorganisation

Soon after this Akbar brought about reorganisation of the government. The Vakil disappeared as an administrative officer, and the title was retained as an honourific office. Henceforward the Diwan signed all the State documents both as the Diwan as well as the Vakil.

Diwan: The Mughal ministry in Akbar's reorganisation came to consist of the Diwan, the Mir Bakhshi, the Khan-i-Saman, and the Sadr as principal heads of the revenue, the military, the public works and industries and the judicial, ecclesiastical, and education departments, respectively. This division of work continued throughout the Mughal period. Under the Ministers, but having the right of access to the emperor, were the Mustaufi (the Auditor General), the Superintendents of the Artillery, of Elephants and of War Boats, the Chief Qazi, the Chief Mufti (Legal Adviser) and the Chief Muhtasib (Censor).

The Diwan was the King's minister par excellence. The work of every other minister came under his supervision. As the keeper of the King's purse he had a say in all matters where any expenditure was to be incurred. All the earning departments were under his control. The Bakhshi, the Khan-i-Saman and the Sadr spent the revenues the Diwan raised. All the imperial orders were first recorded in his office before being sent, and he alone issued orders on behalf of the king.

Of course, the entire revenue administration of the empire was under him. Thus, the smooth working of the administrative machinery very often turned on the way the Diwan's office was run. The Mughal emperors were very fortunate in some of their

Diwans. Raja Todarmal, Raja Raghunath, Diwan Sadullah Khan and Jafar Khan left traditions of public service which became the envy of the later ages.

Mir Bakhshi: After the Diwan came the Mir Bakhshi. The Mughal emperors never employed Commander-in-Chiefs of their entire army. This was not feasible because the Mughal army mainly consisted of the independent contingents of the Mansabdars. The Mir Bakhshi was his chief military adviser. He worked as the Inspector-General of the Contingents of the Mansabdars and their Paymaster holding annual reviews of troops and troopers.

He was the nerve centre of the administration. All the newswriters outside the capital were his agents. The provincial Bakhshi was the news-writer-in-chief for his province. The provincial Bakhshi's report usually was a review of the work of all the Mansabdars in the province. The Mir Bakhshi was thus in a position to pass judgment on the work of all the public servants working outside the capital. At the capital, the Mir Bakhshi had several departmental heads under him. The Superintendents of artillery, elephants and war boats were placed immediately under him. There was a separate Bakhshi of gentleman troops called Ahadis.

Khan-i-Satnan*:* The Khan-i-Saman was the third secular minister. In theory he was an under-minister only, being technically under the Diwan. In actual practice, however, he had independent access to the emperor and was usually allotted lump sum grants which he distributed as he thought fit. He represented his own requirements himself to the emperor in the court. He was the minister in charge of the household department, royal buildings, roads, gardens, purchase, stores and workshops. He thus performed the duties of modem ministers for public works, trade, industry and agriculture, besides acting as the controller of the royal household.

Sometimes very near the king's person, but administratively outside the king's servants, was the Sadr. Associated with him there were a Chief Qazi and a Legal Remembrancer (the *Mufti)* and under him worked the Chief Muhtasib (Censor) and the imperial collector of the *jizya,* at the capital, and Qazis, collectors of the *jizya,* and *Sadrs* in the provinces.

The Sadr: The Sadr was the Chief Justice, Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs, Minister of Education, and Royal Alms, or all rolled into one. But in the judicial department he functioned more as the Chief Qazi than the Sadr. In Aurangzeb's reign there were separate Chief Qazis and Sadrs.

The Sadr's main duty was patronage of learning, piety and scholarship. Akbar appointed provincial Sadrs besides the imperial Sadr. This curtailed the power of the Chief Sadr since recommendations for making grants did not always originate with him. Akbar seems to have made it necessary for his later Sadrs to take his orders in making grants. Under Jahangir this system continued. The Sadrs and the other officers under them were usually stipendiaries under Akbar. But Akbar gave his last *Sadr* a *mansab.*

The Muhtasib: The Muhtasib was both an ecclesiastical and secular officer. As a secular officer he examined weights and measures and saw to it that fair prices prevailed in the market. He recovered debts and traced and handed over to their owners fugitive slaves. He saw to it that public streets or markets were not built upon.. Under Aurangzeb his ecclesiastical functions predominated, whereas he performed certain border line functions as well; putting down the public sale of intoxicants, wine, bhang, Tadi (toddy), protecting sexual morality by preventing the prostitutes from carrying on their profession openly in the cities, and preventing gambling may be considered as his border line functions.

Besides all this he had to secure the observance of the punitive law against the Hindus as promulgated by Aurangzeb; thus, putting down of public worship by the Hindus, closing down of some of their shrines, the enforcement of sartorial regulations, prevention, of the celebration of the Hindu festivals of Dipavali and Holi, and putting down of newly erected temples were some of his duties. He reported apostasy and blasphemy and secured punishment of the guilty. So far as the Muslims were concerned, he had to secure the observance of the Muslim way of life as understood by Aurangzeb.

He put down music; prevented the lighting of lamps on Muslim tombs and shrines on Thursday, forbade the sale of toys representing animate beings, hindered the growth of the beards of uncanonical length and shape, and enforced sartorial regulations. He prevented the public non-observance of the fast during the month of Ramzan. At prayer time he sent all Muslims to pray in the nearby mosque.

Darogha-e-Dak: The Darogha-e-Dak Chauki ran the imperial post. His agents were everywhere. At every stage, a horse was kept ready for use by his messengers. They brought news in all ways, on foot and on horse, by rivers or over the mountains.

System of Taxation

The Mughal emperors exploited several sources of revenue. They levied direct taxes on income and persons, profession and property. They made money by extensive commercial undertakings of various kinds. They raised substantial sums by indirect taxes such as customs duties, transit dues, octroi, sales tax, and the excise duty on manufactures. Administration of justice brought in a small sum in fines and judicial fees.

The emperor was the heir to all property without proper title, and salvages from ship-wrecks were his. Registration fee was paid when transactions were recorded or certain ceremonies performed. The emperors received presents from their officers and subjects as also from foreign rulers sending embassies to India. War often became a source of income; indemnity was sometimes levied besides receipts from plunder. Under Babur and Humayun, and again under Aurangzeb, certain burdens were shouldered by non-Muslims which can be best described as taxes on religion.

It is well to remember that there was always a difference between what the citizens paid and the receipts credited to the treasury. Many officials levied charges which were not credited to the State; some of these formed customary authorised methods whereby they were allowed to supplement their salaries; others were not only not authorised but were from time to time forbidden by various emperors. The first should undoubtedly be included among taxes whereas the second class can only be termed exactions. But both formed the burden the people had to bear.

Land Revenue: Among the direct taxes on income, the land revenue figured most. As in modem India, several systems of assessment and collection of land revenue prevailed in Mughal India. All of them were based on the principle that the land revenue demanded by the State should not ordinarily exceed one-third of the actual produce and should never be more than one-half thereof. In certain States of Rajputana as little as 1 /7 or 1/8 of the produce was paid. Aurangzeb fixed one-half of the produce as the maximum.

Of course, in certain cases a share of the actual produce, when harvested, was claimed. But sharing could take several other forms as well. Sometimes the standing crop was divided between the cultivator and the State. In some parts of the

country, the cultivator assigned one-third of his field to the State as it was brought under cultivation. To avoid bickering on both sides *Kankut* was resorted to. When the harvest was ripening, skilful appraisers were appointed who tried to estimate the probable yield of the crop. One-third of the estimated crop was then assigned to the State and was paid when the crop was harvested.

Sharing was seldom considered a satisfactory method of collecting land revenue. It provided several occasions for defrauding the State. One way out of the difficulty was provided by resorting to an outright payment in cash irrespective of the prop area or the value of the crop. This was done by taking an average of the land revenue paid by a cultivator for all his lands during the last ten years. *Nasaq,* as this system was called, seems to have been much favoured by Aurangzeb.

Zabti*:* But the Zabti was the system most in use in different parts of the Mughal empire. Developed by Akbar on the lines laid down by Sher Shah, it set up a demand schedule differing, though ever so slightly, from one assessment circle to another. There were more than 170 assessment circles in the empire, every one of them with a schedule of its own. The assessment circle represented an area where the same, or nearly the same, cash prices for agricultural produce usually prevailed. The schedule of demand was based on the principle that one-third of the produce was due to the State.

For this purpose the assessment rates of Sher Shah were used. These laid down the amount in kind due to the State from one bigha of land under different crops. Sher Shah had prepared his schedule by taking the average produce per bigha of various crops in fields of varying fertility. The average seems to have been struck some time about 1542, and the lands selected must have been in the neighbourhood of the capital, Agra.

Akbar made various experiments for successfully converting Sher Shah's demand in kind into cash. As we have seen above, he guarded against varying prices in different parts of the country by dividing it into about 172 assessment circles. In an assessment circle, the average of the prices of various crops prevailing during the past ten years was struck and used for the conversion of the State demand into cash.

Thus, wherever the *Zabti* prevailed the cultivators paid land revenue only for that portion of their land which was under cultivation. As it was paid in cash, the rates per bigha differed from crop to crop.

Under all types of assessments except the *Nasaq*, the State stood to gain if more land was brought under cultivation or if more valuable crops were substituted for those yielding lower prices. It became thus an urgent duty of the State to encourage agriculture. A graduated system of assessment was laid down when waste land was broken or fallow land brought under cultivation. The normal rate of assessment was reached in the fifth year, thus allowing a margin for initial expenses in the first four years. Advances were also given to the cultivators in order to enable them to defray the initial cost of the change.

As the State demand was very high, whenever crops failed, remissions were granted. Under Aurangzeb it was customary to leave with the cultivator at least one-half of the actual produce in bad years. Though this may have made a big fall in the income of the State, it does not seem to have provided much relief to the cultivator during famine. They left their land uncultivated and wandered away in search of food.

The cultivators owned the land subject to the State's claim to the revenue. They could sell, mortgage and give it in gift. Usually, there was not much buying of land because in most places enough wasteland was available for cultivation.

***A Safe System**: The* system of collection of land revenue introduced under Akbar safeguarded the rights of the cultivators. Every season surveyors visited the village, and with the help of the *patwari,* who was an employee of the village, recorded the area under various crops. On the basis of this record demand slips were issued early in the season, indicating the amount due in cash from every cultivator. The village *Muqaddam* collected the land-revenue some time in cash, some time in kind, but issued receipts for cash. He paid the whole demand for the village in cash and was granted *2Vz* per cent for his pains by the State.

Akbar abolished all customary cesses; the surveyor's fee, the expenses of their board, and the Muqaddam's commission were all paid by the State. A copy of the demand register was sent to the Diwan's office. At the end of the collections for the season, an attested list of arrears was sent to the Diwan's office. The arrears formed the first charge on the crop. Any amount received in excess was credited to the next season's land revenue. The collections were made twice a year in one lump sum. In Aurangzeb's reign the *Nasaq* revenue was realised in instalments.

Akbar's demand formed a lighter burden than the modem land revenue assessment except in ryotwari areas. No *Zamindars-mere* landlords-were recognised apart from the territorial chiefs. The cultivator today pays between 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the produce to the landlord, whereas a Mughal cultivator paid only 33 1/3 per cent to the State. But peasant proprietors today pay about 16 2/3 per cent of the produce which is about one-half of what was paid by the Mughal cultivators.

Much has been made of the extra exactions of the officials and their high-handedness. That they continued charging some of the taxes remitted by the emperors seems certain, but the

burden of official exactions did not probably differ much from what it is today. The Mughal cultivator had to deal with his revenue officials or *Jagirdars* alone, whereas his descendant today is a victim to the exactions of the officials of the revenue, police, judicial and various other departments as well.

Several estimates have been made of the total revenue of the Mughal empire including the land revenue. Abul-Fazl estimated Akbar's revenue at Rs. 13,21,36,331 and 12,00,000 betel leaves. 'Abdul Hamid Lahori estimated Shah Jahan's revenue at Rs. 38,68,16,584 in the first decade of his reign. But this sum, huge by the standards of those days, and equivalent to about as Rs. 3,09,45,32,472 in its purchasing power today, did not represent the total receipt of the Mughal emperors. It excluded all presents received by the emperors, tributes paid by feudatory princes of various grades, the savings represented by the employment of the contingent of feudatory princes, probably income from the jizya and the pilgrimage tax, judicial fines and fees, war indemnities paid by the vanquished rulers and savings in expenditure by deductions from the salaries of public servants and by employing forced labour paid lower than their usual wages.

Role of Army

The Mughal army was composed of several categories. The most numerous was the cavalry. The infantry numbered very much on paper, but militarily its important part was formed by the musketeers. The heavy artillery was mostly used in sieges, but Babur had used them in open warfare and his successors kept up the practice. The elephants had formed a pivot of the Indian army from time immemorial. Even the Mughals found them useful. Campaigning in Bihar and Bengal necessitated the

maintenance of a large variety and number of boats for military purposes.

The cavalry was made up of three types of contingents. There were the soldiers serving under the Mansabdars who undertook to bring to the field a certain number of soldiers indicated by either the *swar* rank or otherwise in their warrant of appointment. Another contingent consisted of the soldiers provided by the feudatory princes for imperial services. A third group consisted of Ahadis, gentlemen troopers usually owing obedience to no one else but to the king. The contingents of the Mansabdars furnished the most numerous part of the cavalry. In theory, even State contingents were contingents of their *Mansabdar-princes.*

Tire Mansabdars were organised in different ranks ranging from the commanders of 10 to those of 7000. In every rank there were three grades depending on the ratio between the *zat* and the *swar* rank of the commander. The actual number of troops brought into the field by the Mansabdar was at first indicated by their command. Towards the end of Akbar's reign, the *swar* rank denoted the number of soldiers a commander was expected to bring into the field. Later on, under Jahangir and his successors, a commander was expected to furnish 1/3 of his *swar* rank in northern India, 1/4 in the Deccan and 1/5 for service outside India, in the campaigns beyond Kabul.

A roll of soldiers employed by the Mansabdars was kept. Akbar introduced the custom of taking detailed description of all the soldiers paid for from the treasury. The *Chahra,* as it was called, secured that Mansabdars brought to imperial service soldiers of approved physique. Every horse carried a double brand, an imperial sign and the first word of the name of his commander. Their contingents were reviewed once a year though Aurangzeb excused this obligation to all Mansabdars of 3000 and above in the Deccan.

As it was, even the original organisation of the Mughal army was defective. In the field or on the march, it was a cumbersome, slow-moving organisation into which an Akbar or a Todarmal might put some life. When Akbar appeared in Gujarat after 22 days' rapid journey, not only were the rebels taken by surprise, even the Mughal commanders would not at first credit the story. Such feats were exceptional and as long as they did take place, the empire was safe. But the vast area of the Mughal camp with its followers always made it a slow thing and an easy target for attack.

The imperial harem sometimes accompanied the emperor; in the Deccan we find Aurangzeb now permitting, now forbidding, the families of the soldiers from residing in the Mughal camp. But confusion was worse confounded by the fact that the Mughal commanders had no maximum of ease or comfort on the field laid down for them. They wore no uniforms. There could be no orders against wearing *Mufti* while on active service. The result was that neither in dress nor in equipment did the great Mansabdars ever try to effect any simplicity on the battle field. It became a point of honour with some of them to appear as well-fed on active service as in the streets of the capital.

Their luxurious standard of life became a scandal and made the Mughal army an easy target for attack by a vigilant and more hardy enemy as the Marathas. This was made all the more possible because there were no State arrangements for transport in the Mughal army. A soldier or an officer carried whatever baggage he could afford to take with him. This militated against the enforcement of any standard of life in the army as legitimate or permissible.

We have already seen that the lack of any State organisation for supply to the army on active service gave an active enemy a chance of embarrassing and harassing the Mughal troops by

falling on their supplies. This again became very apparent during the Maratha campaign.

The Mughal soldiers were only indirectly recruited by the emperor. The Mansabdars raised them and paid them out of the money specially granted to them by the State. But the soldiers knew no higher loyalty than that to their own commander. Of course, when their commanders rebelled, the rank and file usually followed them in their rebellion. If their commander was killed in action, they fled knowing nobody to whom they could look to for orders or support.

There was lack of regimentation in the Mughal army. This led to a very low proportion of officers to men on active service. The five thousand soldiers under a Mughal *amir* knew only one commander. Thus, when the single commander was killed in action, even if the soldiers were ready to die in his cause and on his side, no one could come forward legitimately to lead them to action. The morale of the soldiers was therefore lower than it would have been in a well-officered army such as the Maratha army proved to be, Panic could only be prevented by the appearance, actual or rumoured, of the commander as of Akbar at Haldighati, on the battle field. All other means proved usually abortive.

2

Mughal System of Governance

Significantly, Mughal administration owed much to earlier reforms and experiments. The administrative history of Muslim India has a certain unbroken continuity. In the disturbed conditions of pre-Mughal India, dynastic changes were frequent, but Muslims have a strong sense of historical tradition and it would have been surprising if the results of administrative experiments in one generation had not been passed on to the next.

The administrative structure which goes under the name of "Mughal Administration" and which the British took over in the eighteenth century was the culmination of the experience gained during centuries of Muslim rule, and owed not a little to Ala-ud-din Khalji, Sher Shah Suri, and even to pre-Muslim system of government.

The histories dealing only with rulers like Akbar "have not been able to bring Akbar in proper historical perspective with the result that they have ignored the heritage of the past and the forces that were responsible for his actions". Professor Qanungo, on the other hand, has tried to prove in his study of Sher Shah Suri "that most of the credit that has gone to Akbar should have been given to Sher Shah in the field of administrative reforms". These controversies are due to the narrow compass within which writers studying a particular ruler or an age have dealt.

By describing the prominent and permanent features of administrative organisation of all periods, we have tried to steer clear of this difficulty, but it may be useful to reiterate that, although in this chapter we shall deal mainly with the administration of the Mughals, that administration had drawn heavily on the past.

Central Authority

The organisation of the Mughal central government was essentially on the same lines as that of the Sultanate. The Principal officers of the central government, having ranks similar to the ministers, were four: (1) *Diwan,* (2) *Mir Bakhshi* (3) *Mir Saman;* and (4) *Sadr.*

The first dignitary was often called the *Wazir.* He was mainly concerned with the revenue and financial administration, but as he had a say in all matters involving expenditure, the work of other departments also came under his supervision, and he functioned as the king's minister *par excellence.* All the imperial orders were first recorded in his office before being issued, and the provincial governors, district *faujdars,* and leaders of expeditions came to him for instructions before proceeding to the assumption of their duties. All the earning departments were under his direct control, and the *Bakhshi,* the *Khan-i-Saman* and the *Sadr* could spend only the revenues which the *Diwan* raised. Occasionally a higher dignitary, designated the *Vakil,* was also appointed and functioned like the *Naib* (Deputy) of the Sultanate period, but creation of this office, as of the corresponding post under the Sultanate, was sporadic, and depended on the wishes of the monarch and the requirements of the situation.

The *Mir Bakhshi* performed duties which were the responsibility of the *'Arid-i-Mumalik* during the earlier period.

Owing to the organisation of the civil services on military lines, his power extended far beyond the War Office, and some foreign travellers have called him the Lieutenant-General or the Captain-General of the realm.

Sadr-i-Jahan (or briefly Sadr) was, as in the earlier period, head of the religious department, charities and endowments. The main departure from the Sultanate was in respect of the fourth minister. Work relating to State *karkhanahs,* stores, ordnance and communications was now so important that the dignitary dealing with it, and called *Mir Saman,* ranked as an important minister often senior in rank to the *Sadr.*

The Minister

The splendour and stability of the Mughal rule was due to a succession of very capable rulers, but they attempted to build up an efficient administrative system, and chose their principal officers with care and on the basis of merit. The most famous Diwan under Akbar was Raja Todar Mai, who for a time acted as the chief minister of the realm, but the contribution of Khwajah Mansur and Mir Fathullah Shirazi to the building up of Akbar's revenue administration was perhaps equally great. Under Jahangir, Itimad ud-Daulah, the father of Nur Jahan, who was a *Diwan* even before the king's marriage with his daughter, remained the chief *Wazir* and *Diwan* till his death. He was succeeded by his son Asaf Khan, who became the *Vakil* just before the death of Jahangir.

In course of time, I'timad ud-Daulah and Asaf Khan became connected with the throne on account of family ties, but both were able, efficient officers, and held high positions in the State even before Jahangir's marriage to Nur Jahan.