

prompt in darting to the winning side in every war of succession or foreign invasion because they knew that their lands and even personal property were not legally assured to them but depend solely on the pleasure of the king's defacto."

### Social Reforms of Akbar

Akbar did not confine himself in wars and conquests and consolidation but also brought about some social reforms. His social reforms were marked by humane touches. When Akbar reached his twentieth year he experienced in himself a remarkable spiritual change. This unwarranted change acted upon him and moulded his attitude towards his people. Akbar himself said, "On the completion of my twentieth year I experienced an internal bitterness and from the lack of spiritual provision for my last journey my soul was seized with exceeding sorrow."<sup>1</sup> Out of this experience he undertook the following reforms:

**Abolition of enslaving war-prisoners** During the medieval period it was the custom to make the war-prisoners slaves and convert them and their families to Islam. Akbar stopped this practice by an order in 1562 A.D. This edict put an end to this inhuman practice.

**Abolition of Pilgrims' Tax** In 1563 when Akbar encamped at Mathura it was brought to his notice that the Hindus had to pay taxes for visiting places of pilgrimage. He was shocked at it and felt that it was contrary to God's will. Hence in 1563 he issued orders for the abolition of Pilgrims' Tax throughout the country.

**Abolition of Jijia** From the time of the Sultani rule in India Hindus had to pay a tax called Jijia tax. This was derogatory to the Hindus, yet the political situation forced them to pay the tax. Jijia prevented the Hindus and the Muslims to build up unity among themselves. Akbar realised [1] that an All-India empire could not be built without the support of the majority Hindus. [2] He felt that Hindu-Muslim unity was necessary for the expansion and preservation of the Mughal empire. [3] His religious-bend of mind also helped Akbar to abolish the Jijia. Akbar promulgated in 1564 a decree which abolished the Jijia tax. The removal of Jijia helped Akbar to fulfil his cherished idea.

**Abolition of Sati** Akbar issued an edict by which he tried to stop the inhuman age-old Hindu custom of Sati. According to this custom, a Hindu widow had to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. In many cases women were forced to perform this crude practice. Akbar was not satisfied by issuing orders prohibiting Sati and he appointed certain officials to

1. Quoted in A. L. Srivastava—Ibid, P. 141.

(The mansabdari system comprised all departments of the government—"the army, the peerage and the civil administration all rolled in one". This system operated wonderfully in the hands of Akbar. But subsequently, when the number of mansabdars increased during the reigns of Jahagir, Shahjahan, vices of corruption began to erode the system. During the times of Aurangazeb the number of mansabdars became too large to be controlled by one man—that is the emperor. Shahjahan, failing to placate the corrupt practice of mansabdars keeping less soldiers and horses, gave the fraudulent practice legal sanction by allowing them to keep one third of troops than their mansab number. This adjustment told upon the imperial scoffer and impoverished the army. Secondly, the Mughal emperors beginning from Akbar down to Aurangazeb, used this system for diplomatic reasons. They wanted to include into the imperial service any prominent tribe or section of people by giving them mansabs. Akbar did this to the Rajputs and Shiekhjadas, Aurangazeb showed bounties to the Marathas. As sufficient mansabs (on cash payment) were not available they were given Jagirs. To provide these new mansabdars with Jagirs many 'Khalisa' (crown) land passed to them making the exchequer poorer.) Thirdly, the nobles, in order to get a better Jagir or precedence in royal favour often took recourse to malpractices like bribing. Fourthly, internal coteries of nobles were often engaged in feuds thus destroying the unity and integration of the army and administration. Fifthly, the soldiers under mansabdars were loyal to their employers and not to the emperor. Akbar's personality attracted veneration from both the mansabdar and his troop. But later, though the emperor paid for the mansabdar's cavalry, he had to depend upon his paid servant's wish to get unquestioned support from the army. This state of duality eroded the army's moral strength in times of the later Mughals. Sixth was the vice resulting from the 'escheat' clause of the mansabdari system. This clause prevented the mansabdar's son to inherit the title and property of the dead mansabdar. The big wig officers of the Mughal court, the armies and umrahs, knew that their properties would go back to the state after them and nothing would remain. So they were busy in spending as much as they could. Lavish spending on festivities and merry-making, amorous adventures, drinks etc. were the usual practices of an aristocrat. The 'escheat' system did not allow the nobility to evolve into a responsible aristocratic force resisting tyranny of emperors. This system made the 'mansabdars' slaves to the wish of the emperor. Jadunath Sarkar's comments on this 'escheat' system may be a fitting close to this chapter:—

"It (the 'escheat' system) made the Mughal nobility a selfish band,



nobles—who came along with Babur and followers of Humayun. These  
 Nature and  
 composition of  
 the system were Uzbeks, Afghans who were not locals proper yet  
 not out-ciders. Akbar struck a balance amongst the local  
 Sherik-jadai and Hindu Rajputs. In his times and later  
 too, whenever any racial or provincial section of people

grew into power and became a potential danger or trouble for the  
 emperor, efforts were made to bring them under the mansabdari fold  
 and to give them military or administrative posts. Thus they became  
 officers under the imperial service. It was obvious that these various  
 groups of races and religions should have their own coteries and  
 fractions who were at daggers drawn with nobles whom they hated.  
 But Akbar was able to keep balance amongst these heterogeneous  
 members of his officers so brilliantly that he had not to depend on  
 a special or particular class of mansabdar in times of need.

Mansabdars and their troops under Akbar were under strict control  
 of the central authority. In this respect, mansabdari system was an  
 improvement upon the older military organisation. Individual soldiers  
 owed their allegiance to their leaders and the mansabdars were loyal  
 to the emperor. Thus the emperor, comments Abul Fazal, without

undergoing the trouble of maintaining his own troop,  
 Merits of the  
 system was able to build up a vast army, by introducing this  
 mansabdari system. From the adventuring races from

Central Asia who came to India to make their fortune—like the  
 Mongols, the Uzbeks, the Afghans in subordination annoyed the  
 emperor for long. Akbar set his Rajput mansabdars by their side in  
 such a manner as to keep a balance in his army. Besides this, as his  
 mansabdar generals were directly controlled by the emperor, they  
 were loyal to him per necessity. For this reason his army acquired  
 a certain standard of efficiency and discipline which helped him to  
 build his empire, keep it safe and lasting for centuries. By keeping  
 strict vigilance and control over the mansabdars of different castes  
 and classes, Akbar was able to enhance the system's efficiency  
 considerably. Many foreign visitors to his court have highly praised  
 of the efficiency and discipline of the Mughal army. Akbar was always  
 very alert about the organisation of his army, the amenities and needs  
 of his soldiers and their discipline. He had a keen insight into human  
 character. As such he would select his officers and generals judging  
 their efficiency, courage and loyalty. That Akbar got success in battles  
 all throughout his life is a proof how successfully he used his  
 mansabdars' services in building up his empire. The veneration that  
 Akbar receives as one of the greatest rulers of India is a tribute to  
 the mansabdari system that freed him from the threats of aristocratic  
 upsurge.

his Zat rank was 5000 and Sawar rank 2500. And if his zat rank was 5000 and sawar rank was less than 2500, he belonged to the third grade. This rule was applicable for all mansabs.

The Mansabdar had to join the emperor's forces and help him with men and auxiliaries in times of war. They were allowed to recruit their own troops who generally belonged to their own

**Duties of Mansabdar** race or tribe. Most of the mansabdar were foreign Turks, Persians and Afghans and local Rajputs. There were some Arabs and men of other nationalities. The number of Indian Muslims (Shikh-jadats) holding high ranks was small. The Mansabdar were required to purchase their horses and equipments, but sometimes these were supplied by the government. Each Mansabdar had to defray the cost of his establishment and the salary of his troops. His salary even after deducting the cost of establishment, was very handsome. A mansabdar of 100 Zat would get Rs 500, a 1000 Zat 4400 and a mansabdar of 5000 Zat's monthly salary was Rs 30,000.

Besides the mansabdar's troops there were 'Dakhili' and 'Ahadi' troops. Some mansabdar commanded dakhili troops which were recruited by the state and the mansabdar would get salary from the state. Ahadis were special troops conducted by an amir. They were very efficient and loyal and were paid higher salaries.

### Some Special features of the System

(During the Mughal period, officers both civil and military held Mansabs. They were frequently transferred from one place to other and from one branch of service to another. All imperial officers, except

**Some Special features of the system** perhaps the Qazis and the sadars were enrolled as members of the mansabdari system and were required to maintain some troops proportionate to their ranks.

The distinction between military and civil service was non-existent during the Mughal period. As is seen in the cases of Man Singha—chiefly a general, being made Governor of Orissa, or Todarmol—chiefly a man of accounts being sent to lead the expedition to Gujrat. A mansabdar's Zat or Sawar rank would not also indicate his position in the Imperial Court. Abul Fazal, the wise minister and friend of Akbar held very respectable position in the court. But his salary was much less than that of a class I mansabdar of 5000. On the other hand, Man Singha a very able general and mansabdar of 7000 was never a minister of Akbar's court.

The nature and composition of Mughal aristocracy was a combination and amalgamation of different and varied races. The mansabdar were recruited from amongst Iranis, Turanis, Chaghatai

officer for the purpose) would brand the number of the horse and the number of its master in either of its legs. A Chehra or descriptive roll of the officer (mansabdar) was prepared in which were entered his name, his father's name, his tribe or caste, his place of origin and details of his personal appearance. Branding was not a new thing. It was first introduced by Alauddin Khalji and later followed by Sher Shah. Akbar re-introduced this system to minimise deception in his cavalry with partial success.

Abul Fazal mentions 66 grades of mansabdars in the Ain, but virtually 33 grades are found in all. The gradation was made on the basis of number of soldiers under a mansabdar. The lowest grade was of ten men and the highest was 5000 men. Mansabs of 7000, 8000 and 10000 were special grades and were reserved for the princes of the royal family although

*Grades of  
Mansabdar*

we can find some exceptions in the cases of Man Singha, Todormal and Qulich Khan who enjoyed 7000 mansabs by dint of their exceptional services to the emperor. Officers below the grade of 500 were called Mansabdars; from 500 to 2500 zat holders were called 'Amirs' and men enjoying even higher grades than Amirs were called 'Amir-i-Umda'. But in general all these grades were included under the common title 'mansabdar'. There was no hard and fast rule of promotion and gradation of mansabdars. Any one could ascend to the highest point of the hierarchy by showing his worth to the emperor. Sometimes an exceptionally competent mansabdar, who pleased the emperor by loyal and devoted service, was given an abnormally high lift. So it was not necessary for a mansabdar to pass through various grades in order to reach a very high place. The mansabdar's rank was not hereditary. After the death of a mansabdar his title and 'Jagir' (if he was a Jagirdar) went back to the state. His sons might be appointed 'mansabdars' following the regular process. It depended upon the emperor whether they would be given mansabdari or not.

There were further classifications of the grades of mansabdar. Every mansab of 500 and below comprised three grades, viz., first grade, second grade, and third grade. A mansabdar belonged to the first grade

*Three grades of  
Mansabdars* of a particular rank if his sawar rank was the same as his Zat rank. If, on the other hand, his sawar rank was less than his Zat rank but did not fall below half that of the latter, he belonged to the second grade in that rank. But, if his sawar rank was less than half of his Zat rank or he had no sawar rank at all, he belonged to the third grade in the rank. For example, a mansabdar of 5000 Zat belonged to the first grade in the rank if his Sawar rank was also 5000. He belonged to the second grade if



Majority of mansabdars were paid in cash. They were called 'Mansabdar-i-nagdi'. The rest were given land or jagirs whose revenue was considered to be equal to the amount of his claim of salary. Normally, the jagirdar had no personal claim over his land or jagir. Often jagirdars were transferred to other jagirs. These jagirs were called 'Tankha Jagirs'. The other category of jagirs were called 'Watan Jagirs'. These were territories of local feudal lords or 'Samantas' who enjoyed their land for long before the Mughals came to rule. These 'Watan-Jagirs' were their hereditary property and autonomous in nature. They would determine their own rates of revenues and taxes on their lands. The emperor tried to attach these 'Samantas' to his mansabdari net-work only to have them as friends of the empire. Raja Man Singh was a mansabdar of this category.

#### Appointment of Mansabdars, their transfer, promotions etc.

The emperor was the sole appointing authority of a mansabdar. The general practice in this regard was that the Mir Bakshi would make a list of applicants and present it before the emperor for selection.

The emperor would hold an interview with the persons seeking appointment. On the basis of this, the emperor would select a few names and that would be recorded by the Diwan and the Mir Bakshi. Then the Wazir would make appointment letters for the mansabdars and would again ratify them by the emperor for the second time. After-wards these appointment letters were sent under sealed cover as 'forman' to the selected mansabdars. Though the emperor was the final authority about appointing a mansabdar, he would sometimes entertain recommendations of the Princes or the wazir. If necessary the emperor, without showing any cause could degrade or discharge a mansabdar. This happened if a mansabdar would fail in his duties or showed signs of disloyalty to the emperor.

Each 'mansabdar' had to produce security before they were given appointment. According to Manucci, security was compulsory even for an ordinary soldier. Generally 'money lenders' of good standing would stand as security of a mansabdar.

Akbar introduced the two categories of mansabdars—Zat and Sawar in order to stop the fraudulent practice of presenting sub-standard or less, horse or men. Still some mansabdars would not maintain proper forces. With a view to check the fraudulent practice of the mansabdars Akbar introduced the system of branding (dagh) and chehra or descriptive roll of the horses and men. During the 'muster' the bakshi (a special

1. M. Athar Ali—Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb.

one number (Zat) was demarketed which indicated the number of horses and men would an officer maintain. In practice, of course, very few officers would or be able to keep the stipulated number of soldiers or horses. As such, Akbar, on the 40th year (1595-96) of his rule revised the Mansabdari system thoroughly. He classified mansabdars under him in three categories. The basis of distinction was how many cavalymen really a mansabdar should keep as against his rank in the army. From this time the rank of 'Sawar' was separated from his Zat rank. From the next year the two-ranks 'Zat and Sawar' were settled permanently.

On the basis of the dual positions of a mansabdar (Zat and Sawar) the amount of his claims were determined. His Zat would indicate his personal salary. His 'Sawar' rank would determine how much he would be paid from the royal scoffer for maintenance of horses and soldiers. According to Moreland, the payment to a 'sawar' was standardised from 1595 itself. It was 9,600 dam per sawar per annum. But Prof. Irfan Habib has raised questions

Mode of payment against this view. According to him, if such a simple equation was existent, Abul Fazal must have mentioned

it. Rather, the opposite was true. The process of payment to sawars were calculated in a very complex manner which is as follows. In the first, when a man was given 'Sawar' rank a notional amount of payment was fixed for him. This rate was called 'Barabardi' and it existed on ledgers only. For Irani and Turani Mansabdars this rate was 12000 dams and 9600 dams for Indian mansabdars per Sawar per annum. In the next stage, the generals would muster their horses and horsemen soldiers before the 'bakshi' for inspection. The 'bakshi' then would evaluate afresh his emolument on the basis of the class and condition of the horses maintained by him. 'Yak-aspa' or the sawari of one horse would get Rs. 12—Rs. 25 according to their standards. But this

Rank amount was Rs. 15 for the revenue collectors of the emperors 'Khas' or Khalisa land. 'Du-aspa' or Sawars of two horses and 'Shi-aspa' or sawars of three horses

Mansabdar were, perhaps, paid more than 'Yaks aspa' sawars. On this stage after a physaical verification of sawars, and horses, if it was found satisfactory, any mansabdar could claim much more amount of money than the primary 'barabardi' rate. It is to be noted here that Akbar, at the 40th year of his rule made certain changes of this rate. As a result of this change we can find a standard rate of 9600 dam per annum for the yak-aspa soldiers. This rate was much lesser than the previous one. This new rate was changeable too. The mansabdars whose payments were made according to 'Barabardi' rate would seldom keep soldiers and horses at per with their ranks and this was not expected too.



were very critically chosen and appointed by him, were very efficient, aspiring and industrious. The Omrahas, amirs, and other Hindu Mansabdars enjoying 1000 and more zats and sawars were the true pillars of Akbar's empire.

The word 'Mansab' means rank or position in the military service. But the word 'mansab' in the context of Mughal administration meant at least four things: [1] rank in the Court, [2] pay an extra allowances of a holder, [3] dignity and position out-side the capital, [4] obligations and the number of horses, soldiers, elephants and carts a Mansabdar was required to maintain.

Meaning of the word Mansab

Though the word 'Mansab' chiefly refers to the position in the army hierarchy it was applied in cases of civil administration too. As Prof. Qureshi has observed "The mansab was defined in military terms, though the military definition was only a myth or at best a symbol."<sup>1</sup> Though all officials were given a place in the military hierarchy, it was not compulsory for all of them to perform military duties. Still it is underling that under the Mansabdari System all officers, had some sort of military obligations.

For every Mansabdar the emperor would fix two numbers that would determine his 'Zat' and the number of his 'Sawar'. And these two numbers would indicate his position in the army. According to Moreland<sup>2</sup> and Abdul Aziz<sup>3</sup>, 'Zat' denoted the Mansabdar's individual rank or position in the army. The term 'Sawar' would indicate how many soldiers he would maintain. According to A. J. Qaisar<sup>4</sup>, Akbar introduced Mansabdari system in the 18th year (1573-74) of his rule and the two categories—Zat and Sawar of Mansabdars were existing from the very beginning. This view of A. J. Qaisar has been objected to by Shireen Moosvi. She has shown a few stages of evolution of the system under Akbar. According to her, prior to Akbar's accession to the throne and ten years after that there was no fixed military obligation for the officers. In 1566-67 on the 11th year of his rule Akbar first thought of imposing certain military obligations on his officers<sup>5</sup>. He tried to make it obligatory for the Jagirdars to maintain a number of soldiers according to the size of their Jagirs. On the 18th (1573-74) year of his rule Mansabdari system was first officially introduced. Then only

Classification of

Mansabdars:

Zat and Sawar

1. I. H. Qureshi—The Administration of the Mughal Empire, Karachi-1966, P. 89.
2. W. H. Moreland—Rank in the Mogul State Service, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London 1936.
3. Abdul Aziz—The Mansabdari System and the Mughal Army (1945).
4. A. J. Qaisar—A note on the Date of Institution of Mansab under Akbar, Progs. of the Indian History Congress 1961.
5. Shireen Moosvi—Evolution of Mansab System, Progs. of the Indian History Congress 1961.



is known that the court poets of Akbar's Khajji received monthly allowances from Diwan-i-arg. But there is no evidence that they participated in any battle waged by the Sultan.

Besides having the need to organise the royal army and administration on a sound basis, the Mansabdari system was introduced to replace the Jagirdari System. The Mughal administration was military based. The government officials' allegiance to the emperor

Replacement of  
Jagirdari system  
with the  
Mansabdari  
system

was deemed to be essential. But this was not ensured under the Jagirdari system. When Akbar ascended the throne, the state of the army was highly unsatisfactory. Under the Jagirdari system state officials were not paid in cash. They were given 'Jagirs' or over-lordship of certain areas. These over-lords were required to keep

a certain number of horsemen and were bound to serve the emperor in times of war with horse, men, and auxiliaries. But most of these Jagirdars usually kept inefficient soldiers and horses. They would even defraud the state by mastering people of different trades from amongst the rustics and indulged the law. Thus the emperor had to depend on these worthless, undisciplined troops of Jagirdars in times of need. The second defect of the Jagirdari system was that some unscrupulous and powerful Jagirdars would often defy even challenge the emperor. They could easily do so as they were the pay masters of their men in the army. The soldiers would show allegiance to them and not to the emperor. As such, though the army's expenditure were borne by the emperor (through Jagirs) he could not claim their loyalty. Thirdly, under this system dishonest officials could defraud the exchequer by non-payment of taxes and revenues. In order to make place for new Jagirdars many Khajis in government land were deprived of its dues. For all these reasons, Akbar tried to do away with the Jagirdari system as far as possible and replaced it with Mansabdari system in which officers were paid mainly in cash. Akbar's main purpose in abolishing 'Jagir' system was to bring in a thorough change in his army. Instead of relying on the worthless army provided by the Jagirdars he wanted to construct a more trained, disciplined and loyal force of his own.

Akbar was a very able ruler with an instinctive organisational skill. Being troubled by the results of nobles of the empire at the initial

Reform of the  
army was  
brought under  
Mansabdari  
system

years of his rule, he saw the need of organising his army and make it a fitting means of his conquests. He felt the need to reform his army both infantry, cavalry and the navy. In 1571 when Shaitan Khan was appointed Mir Bakshi, Akbar drew up a scheme of reform and entirely changed the structure of the army. The entire

military organisation was thus brought under the 'Mansabdari system' directly under his own control. The Mansabdars under Akbar, as they

first category of Sarkar now was called Faujdar. The Faujdar maintained the law and order in the Sarkar and had under him a military contingent. He helped the revenue collector to collect revenue without any hindrance. He divided the Sarkar into a number of thanas and each thana (Police station) was under a Daroga who was assisted by a body of policemen. Besides the Faujdar, the administration of a Sarkar was carried on by a number of officers viz. Kotwal, Amils, Karoris, Qazis etc.

Each Sarkar was divided into a number of Parganas. Again each Pargana was composed of a number of villages. Each Pargana had a Shikdar, Amin, a Qazi and a number of clerks and treasurers. Their functions remained practically the same as under Sher Shah. Akbar made only a minor change. He transferred the judicial power of the Amin to the Qazi. The lowest rank in the administrative system was the village. The village administration was carried on by village Panchayats with the assistance of the village mondals, mukhiyas, muquaddams and choudhuries etc. The village zamindars also played an important role in the village zamindaries. Beside these, we have references of mahals (revenue divisions), chaklas, ports, towns etc.)

A review of the working of the administrative system would reveal that Akbar established a centralised administration. The later Mughals maintained the same structure with minor addition and alteration. Hence it might be just to call Akbar as the real founder of the Mughal Administration.

### Mansabdari System

A very characteristic feature of Mughal administration was Mansabdari System. Akbar, like Sher Shah was against Jajirdari system. During the Mughal rule the core of both civil and military administration was based on Mansabdari system as was introduced by Akbar. This system was prevalent in Persia from very old days—Akbar followed them in India. Prior to Akbar under the Mughals no effective effort to organise the Imperial service was made. Humayun, of course made a classification of aristocrats on the basis of income into three categories and the nobles, who composed the administrative and military heads of the state were placed in the first class viz. 'Amil-i-Doulot' or men having riches. But he did not have much time to turn the attempt into a success. It is Akbar, who first in history introduced Mansabdari system and brought all government officials under its fold. Of course, we should remember in this context that during the Sultanate, some civil and military officers were paid salaries in cash from the Diwan-in-arig. From the book of Barani it

Introduction of  
Mansabdari  
system by  
Akbar



before the Sultan's ear; whenever, the Sultan was weak, the iqta holder misused his iqta for personal gains. *Secondly*, Irfan Habib has pointed out that most of the iqta holders were urban people and they lived far away from their iqta villages. Due to transfer system, they could never settle in a particular iqta. Therefore the iqta holders used to sell their revenue from iqtas to middlemen in lieu of cash. These middlemen became very prosperous by squeezing the iqtas. They were mostly Multani merchants.

As the income of the iqtas were enjoyed by urban iqta holders and merchants, the towns prospered at the cost of the villages. Population increased in the towns and handicrafts were in high demands. Moreover, the iqta system greatly affected the economy and administration reduced the power and dominance of the Hindu zamindars, rajs, rajas. They were forced to offer allegiance to the Sultanate and offer nazrana. The long hand of the Sultanate extended to distant regions and to rural areas through the iqta system. Irfan Habib thinks that the Hindu Khuts and Muquaddams joined with the peasants to foment revolts against the Sultanate.

**The Maritime and the Export Trade of India under the Sultanate:** Trade in India was wide-spread before the coming of the Turks. India produced valuable products fit for export. The Indian merchants braved the seas for trade in neighbouring countries. When Muslim rule was established in India, their flow of external trade did not diminish. The trade routes of India however changed in the medieval period. *Firstly*, the silk route which formerly extended from China to Kabul and from there to the western sea ports of India was no more used. China established direct link with Persian Gulf region. The circuitous Silk route trade lost its utility since the 8th century. *Secondly*, the Arabian traders participated in the China-Persian Gulf trade. They used South India as middle point for the route covering China-Persian gulf trade. Thus the Asian trade route had two sections i.e. China to India and India to Persian Gulf. In those days plying of ocean going vessels depended purely on climate and the course of wind. Therefore the division of the above trade route in two parts was done for advantage of climate. Two types of vessels were used for this trade, viz the Chinese "Junk" ships and the Indian "dingas" plied between India and China for transport of merchandise. The "dhaos" ships were used for transport of goods between India and West Asia across the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf region. Indian vessels called the

management. He believed that if pressure was given to the muqtis for more revenue, they would overrun the peasants. He did not allow the wazirat to demand  $\frac{1}{10}$ th or  $\frac{1}{12}$ th more than what was paid by the muqtis.

**Muhammad Tughluq's iqta policy: strong centralisation and discipline** He overlooked small embezzlement of revenue by the muqtis. Sultan Muhammad Tughluq decided that as soldiers were paid in cash, therefore iqta-dars need not hold that iqta from which soldier's salary used to be paid. Such iqta were converted into Khalisha lands. Only commanders as iqta-dars doing military duties could have some iqta for their salary or maintenance in lieu of cash salary. The Wazirat made it a point to assign such iqta to commanders whose income was less than their actual salaries.<sup>1</sup> Muhammad believed that the habitually dishonest iqta-dars would overcome the deficit by squeezing the peasants. Sultan Muhammad Tughluq's drastic iqta arrangement alienated his nobility. They frequently revolted against him to ventilate their grievance. The Amiran-i-Sadh revolted in South India for the same reason.

Firuz Tughluq tried to pacify the nobility by setting aside the rigours of Muhammad's iqta policy. *First of all*, he fixed that the total amount of land revenue or Kharaj, which he required would not be more than 6 crore 7 lakh tankas annually. Whatever extra and illegal collections were made by the iqta holders were unclaimed by the government. In other words he granted holiday to iqta holders to deposit their extra taxation to the government. *He overlooked such corruption. Secondly*, he stopped cash payment to soldiers. He assigned them revenue from iqta instead from Khalisha land. *Thirdly*, the soldiers started to sell their assignments to middle men on cash. The latter freely squeezed the peasants. *Fourthly*, Firuz virtually stopped the transfer of iqta-dars. Virtually iqta became jagirs. *Fifthly*, the iqta became mostly hereditary due to lax and appeasing policy of the Sultan. *Sixthly*, Firuz greatly enhanced the salary of his officials. The Hindus used to get 2 lakh tankas and the khans started to receive 4—8 lakh tankas. Iqta yielding such huge amount of revenue were assigned to these Khans and amirs from Khalisha land. Sultan Sikandar Lodi followed the footsteps of Firuz Tughluq.

Thus the iqta system which originally was implemented for collection of revenue and providing the army in the 13th century, became a collecting and administrative office under strict state supervision in the 14th century and later it became a jagir. Whenever the Sultan was a strong man, the iqta holders were forced to play the role of mouse

1. Irfan Habib.



to money economy. These towns needed housing, road making which gave employment to many. Many people lived in these towns by trade. The urban centres were connected by artery of roads which were used for transport of goods and by travellers.

Internal transport over the sub-continent was carried by long river routes and land routes. Boats laden with goods and passengers plied over the Ganges, Yamuna and the Indus. Long overland routes were frequented by caravans and travellers. The Sultans tried to keep safety over the routes.

Domestic and foreign trade flourished in the period. Nayak and Multani merchants were regarded as clever merchants. Barbosa, Ibn Batutah, Ma Huan have referred to extensive foreign trade carried from Indian ports. Calicut, Cochin, Goa, Diu in the Western coast, Satgaon, Chittagong on the eastern coast were famous. Spices, fragrance, cotton and silk fabrics, sugar, indigo and fine rice were exported from these ports. Arabian and Persian merchants as well as Indian merchants participated in export trade. India mainly imported war horse, slaves from West Asia. Indian balance of trade was in her favour and she could acquire gold reserve by export trade. The Multani and Gujrati merchants were very prosperous.

The Multani merchants were very prosperous. They granted loans to the government and the nobility on interest. In spite of India's prosperity, wealth was not equitably distributed. Wealth accumulated in the hands of a few and the poor became poorer. The peasants lived in great poverty. Irfan Habib has pointed out that most of the peasants lived like semi serfs and the khuts, muqaddams and other revenue officials sucked them.

**The Iqta system in the Sultani Period:** The iqtadari system was a Turkish system which prevailed among the Turks before they came to India. According to Tucci, the original iqtadari system among the Turks had three important features viz. (a) The person vested with iqta was styled muqti. He was the person responsible for the collection of revenue of the iqta. (b) Originally, the muqti had no other power except collection of revenue from the peasants. (c) Once the peasants paid up the revenue, the muqti had no control over the life and property of the peasant. (d) The muqti had to obey the law that land and peasant society was a lawful property of the Sultan. The muqti had no right upon it. (e) The muqti, according to Nizam ul-mulk held his office according to the discretion of the Sultan. He could be sacked or transferred by

and the provincial governors coincided at times. The same person held the two offices. Truly speaking, the early Sultans of Delhi assigned the muqti or iqtadar the duty of keeping an army and collecting revenue. They had no administrative function to begin with. Gradually, holders of large iqtas were required to perform administrative duties in addition to their original duties.

Iltutmish was the first Sultan to introduce iqtadari system. He however kept the system of transfer of muqtis, from one iqta to another.

Evolution of  
Iqta system  
from the time  
of Iltutmish to  
that of the  
Khaljis

According to Irfan Habib, the iqtas at the early stage were allotted to army chiefs who maintained their regiments by income of the iqtas. It was a sort of jagir. In the next stage the soldiers of the Sultan serving directly under him were not paid by cash but by small iqtas granted from Khalisa land of the Sultan in Delhi and Doab region. In the third stage in the Khalji period the government became strong, stable and centralised. The Muqtis were therefore compelled to submit iqta accounts and surplus revenue to the government. The soldiers were paid in cash. Hence the muqtis had to submit account of total income of the iqtas.

The central control on the iqtas began from the reign of Balban. According to Barani, Balban insisted that the muqti must deposit surplus revenue (Fwazil) to the government after meeting the expenses of the army. He appointed auditors styled Kwaja to check the accounts. The muqti was asked to maintain fixed number of soldiers from the income of the iqta. Balban made it a point to drive home the principle that iqtadari was no hereditary office.

Balban's Iqta  
policy

Alauddin Khalji made vast conquests. He converted the land around Delhi to Khalisha land and granted iqtas in distant regions. [2] As he started payment of cash salary to soldiers, most iqtas became Khalisha lands. [3] The generals of Alauddin however were granted iqta in lieu of salary. [4] He fixed the rate of revenue of each eqta and asked the iqtadars to collect according to that rate. [5] The dewan-i-wazir or Wazirs' department fixed the total revenue of each iqta. Out of that revenue a part was fixed for mwazib and dasam or salary of the iqtadar and that of the soldiers. [6] The rest of the amount of revenue had to be deposited with the government. [7] Alauddin's wazir Sharaf kai was a stern task-master. He checked the iqta accounts by tallying it with patwari's records. [8] Embezzling of account was punished severely.

Evolution of  
Iqtadari system  
under Alauddin  
Khalji

Ghiyasuddin Tughluq followed a flexible policy in respect of iqta



him. (f) Originally, the muqti was required to keep an army maintained by the income of the iqta. When the Sultan needed the help of these soldiers, the muqti had to send them. So the function of the muqti was a revenue collector cum general. Irfan Habib has pointed out that according to Muslim law, the surplus production of a peasant belonged to the Sultan. In order to collect it and distribute among the ruling class, the iqta system was invented. Such was the origin and condition of iqta system on the eve of the Turkish conquest of India.

When the Ghaznavid Ghuri Sultans conquered North India and dawned, the Sultans found the need of abolishing prevailing feudal system of India. Their another need was to establish a link between Delhi government with distant parts of the kingdom. They also found

Iqta system  
became a part  
of government  
of early  
Sultanate of  
Delhi

the need of rewarding their nobles and officials who helped them to conquer the land. In order to fulfil these objects, the Sultans refurbished the Turkish iqta system and implemented it in this country. There was the need to set up regular administrative system to support the Sultani domination. The Sultans divided the conquered areas among trusted nobles and officials as iqtas. The

function of these iqtadars or muqtis were mainly to put down the revolt of the local Hindu chiefs and to bring them under submission. Their another function was to collect revenue and meet the cost of keeping an army and enjoy their own remuneration. They were required to offer implicit loyalty to the Sultan. These iqta holders came to be known as muqtis, though they differed from the muqtis of Central Asia.

It was Sultan Iltutmish who divided his kingdom into two parts. Delhi, Doab and adjoining regions were kept under direct control of the Sultan

Iqta system  
made extensive  
and regular one  
by Iltutmish

as Khalisa or Khalim. The rest of the dominion was divided by him into large and small units called iqtas and placed them under military governors styled muqtis or iqtadars. There were two types of iqtas in these days viz iqta-i-tamalik and iqta-i-istigh-lal. The first one

was common iqta and was important. It related assignment of land. The second one was assignment of allowance only and rarely implemented. Iltutmish hoped to make the administration of the Sultanate strong and dominating by appointing iqtadars with autonomous powers, owing loyalty to him. They could keep the local Hindu rais, rajas in check.

We need not confuse between the Naib Sultan and the iqtadars. The former were provincial governors. They either bore blood of the royal family or were trusted nobles of the court. They governed some of the provinces as agents of the Sultan. On the other hand the iqta holders