



A Critical Analysis of Mansabdari System

Pritha Mukherjee*

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Keywords :

*Mansabdari, Mughals,
Jamindar, Sowar, Officer,
Regime*

ABSTRACT

Mansab was basically a bureaucratic rank in the Mughal imperial services which was hierarchal in nature. Every civil and military officer was given a mansab rank. The salaries of the official were fixed through this rank. Mansabdaris basically the mechanization through which akbar structured hi nobility. It was not a hereditary rank and a mansabdar was frequently transferred from one place to another so that he didn't get an opportunity to develop local roots. Percivear spear has something to say very interesting about the Mughal empire and he says that the mansabdars were the governing class of the Mughal empire and says that it is not an example of the Asiatic despotism has been portrayed by the orientalist coz the despots exercised absolute power but the Mughal rulers were dependent on the their mansabdars for the effective exercise of their powers. According to spear Akbar was inspired by the Taimur's decimal system of classification of his nobles and is horsemen which then lead him to create a graded bureaucratic system. It was from Taimur from whom he took the idea of rank indicated by numbers. According to spear mansabdars was purely a graded system of distinction between ranks and obligation to produce troops and a complete dependence of mansabdars on the government for their maintenance.

Mansab was basically a bureaucratic rank in the Mughal imperial services which was hierarchal in nature. Every civil and military officer was given a mansab rank. The salaries of the official was fixed

**Pritha Mukherjee is an educationist. She has been teaching in various schools for last 5 years. She has a Masters in History from Lady Shriram College, Delhi and a Bachelor's in Education. She has been a PGT in History and has an experience of handling students of senior classes. She writes articles for research journals.*

through this rank. Mansabdaris basically the mechanization through which akbar structured hi nobility. It was not a hereditary rank and a mansabdar was frequently transferred from one place to another so that he didn't get an opportunity to develop local roots.

Percivear spear has something to say very interesting about the Mughal empire and he says that the mansabdars were the governing class of the Mughal empire and says that it is not an example of the Asiatic despotism has been portrayed by the orientalist coz the despots exercised absolute power but the Mughal rulers were dependent on the their mansabdars for the effective exercise of their powers.

According to spear Akbar was inspired by the Taimur's decimal system of classification of his nobles and is horsemen which then lead him to create a graded bureaucratic system. It was from Taimur from whom he took the idea of rank indicated by numbers.

According to spear mansabdars was purely a graded system of distinction between ranks and obligation to produce troops and a complete dependence of mansabdars on the government for their maintenance.

By the Akbar's death it is acceptable without argument that mansab system can be explained in two numerical representation the first one is zat which determined the holder's personal pay and the hierarchy and 2nd is sawar which indicated the number of horsemen to be maintained by the holder. They are both interconnected to each other, a person zat rank determines his sawar rank

One significant debate which revolves around the whole issue is that there are some historians like Moreland who argues that this numerical rank was introduces in the 11thregnal year of Akbar while there are others who believes that no such system existed until the 18thregnal year.

Moreland and Abdul Aziz held the view that a single numerical rank existed before Akbar, which directly indicates the size of the cavalry contingent that rank holder was expected to maintain. Moreland believes that it was Akbar who introduced the second sawar rank in his 11thregnal year which indicated the size of the cavalry contingent to be maintained while the first became the zat rank indicating the personal pay and status.

But Shreen Moosvi argues that in the 11th regnal year there was only a attempt made to work out the military obligation from the estimated revenues of jagir. But there is one strong evidence coming which suggested that numerical rank exist right from the beginning of Akbar's reign and that comes from the

Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazal, where he in his list of nobles assigns numerical rank even to those who died before the 18th regnal year.

But A.J. Qaisar argues that he did this in order to place them in the same list of hierarchal order . He justifies his argument by referring to the list of Akbar's nobles in tabaqat-akbari which doesnot have any numerical rank to any noble died before the 18th regnal year.

Nizam-uddin in his tabaqat-i-Akbari says that his finding is same as that of Qaisar and that he is unable to find any instance of mansabbeing assigned to any noble who is known to have died before 18th year. Nizamuddin while making a reference to the Ain's list of nobles concludes that mansab given in the Ain's list are not zat ranks but single ranks that represented the number of troopers to be mustered and at the same time determined their personal pay.

Now as far as the salaries of the mansabdars is concerned, they were sanctioned a separate personal payment and a separate payment for the maintenance of the troops. The salaries of the mansabdars were fixed according to their mansabrank, the personal pay of the troopers were called 'khaso' while the pay sanctioned for the maintenance of the troopers were called 'tabina'.Mansabdars used to receive handsome paymnets for example a mansabdar of 5000 rank was given a salary of 30000 per month while a mansabdar of 3000 rank was given a salary of 1700 per month.

Now Irfan Habib talks about one very peculiar system i.e, the 'barawardi' system, where all the mansabdars were assigned a uniform payment before the branding for the maintenance of their troopers after the branding of the troopers they were then awarded the remaining payment. So therefore fixing of trooper's payment was carried out through 2 stages. Badauni talks about another very significant obligation of the mansabdars i.e., to maintain animals such as horses, elephants and mules, camels out of his own personal payment. They were also required to be presented for the 'dagh'.

There was also a limit set by the Akbar to the rank of the mansabdars. Only the royal blooded princess were given the mansab rank of above 5000 while for others the maximum limit was 5000 , however there were exception.

Since there was always an increasing gap between the estimated jama and hasilinorder to resolve this situation akbar cut down the military obligatoin of the mansabdar and in this regard Shreen Moosvi talks doubt the final evolution of mansab system in 40th regnal year, Where mansabdars were grouped into 3 categories.



1st - those to maintainsawars equal to their mansab number were placed in 1st category.

2nd - those who maintained sawars equal to half of their mansab number

3rd - those with horsemen smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$ of their mansab.

A mansabdar according to the debish formulae was also required to maintain 10 cavalymen for 20 horses which were called the shi-asap where each person had to maintain 3 horses, then there is do-asap where each man had to maintain 2 horses and finally the ask as where each man had to maintain one horse.

There's another very distinct type of mansab called the mashrutmansab given in the zortalab area (rebellious), where it is difficult to extract revenue, therefore the mansabdar of that particular area is given an extra sawar rank in the form of mashrutmansab. Akbar also followed the policy of transferring the mansabdars from one place to another so that they didn't get the opportunity of developing personal contacts with the local potentates.

Recruitment to this order was nominally in the hands of the emperor and was based on a number of factors like-

1. A young men from abroad would present himself in the imperial darbar in such a manner that we would catch the eye of the emperor and would be enrolled in the service.
2. Emperor would sometimes confer mansabs on men of who report of good service had come in.
3. Or there could be men who caught eye on campaigning or in battle.
4. There were sometimes also appointment made for diplomatic reasons with political overtones like those of Rajput chiefs, Maratha Sirdars and the Deccani sultans

Akbar had introduce this rank in order to organize his nobility in a more systematic manner, to make his administration more centralized and also increase the military efficiency of his empire and also during this time a lot of infiltration in the nobility was taking place due to the Deccan campaigns, thus he introduced this new rank in order to accommodate this new nobles.

References:

1. *Satish, Parties and Politics at Mughal court 1707-1740 Posted: 1959*
2. *Richards John, F, Posted: 1995: Habib Irfan : Akbar and his India Posted: 1997*
3. *Chandra Satish, History of Medieval India, (Hyderabad: Orient blackswan pvt Ltd Posted: 2007*