

## Component-I (A) – Personal details:



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Paper : **Indian Polity**

Module : **Mughal Empire : Mansabdari System**



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### Component-I (B) – Description of module:

Subject Name	Indian Culture
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Module Name/Title	Mughal Empire : Mansabdari System
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Objectives	To know about the features of Mansabdari system under Mughals
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### E-text (Quadrant-I) :

#### 1. Introduction

Mansabdari system is a unique system that was devised in India by the Mughals. The mansab or rank in this system was awarded to an individual fixed both his status in the official hierarchy as well as his salary. It also fixed the number of armed retainers or *tabinan* that the *mansabdar* was responsible to maintain for the service of the state.

The mansabdar could have been given a military post, an administrative post or any other job in the court. Thus the *mansabdari* was a service that encompassed the administrative as well as the military position and the state could utilise the same person for both jobs. The salary could be paid in cash or grant in the form of *jagir*. Grant of the *jagir* gave the right to collect all kind of due from the *jagir* for the state.

The *mansabs* ranged from 10 to 5,000 during Akbar. In the multiple of 10 there were sixty six categories ranging from 10 to 100 and then from 50 to 100. The number sixty six was notional number. The rank increased during his successors.

The term *mansab* was not used uniformly in popular mind. Rank holders up to 500 was called mansabdar. From 500 to 2500 were called *amirs* and those from 2500 and above were called *amiriumda*, or *amir-i-azam*. Later all those below 1000 were called *mansabdars*. The practice was that a person would enter the service in the lower rank and then would get promoted. The ruler through his discretionary power could again induct efficient people in the higher rank. This system in the course of time was extended to the hereditary indigenous regional leaders that is different chiefs and rajas.

The ranks from 5000 to 10,000 were reserved for royal princes. During the last few years of Akbar's rule Mirza Aziz Koka, Akbar's milk brother and Raja Man Singh, related to Akbar through matrimonial relation, was promoted to the rank of 7000 *mansabdar*. Till the time of

Aurangzeb 7000 was the maximum *mansab* that the noble could aspire for. However, over the period the ranks granted to the princes rose to the dizzy height of 40,000 *zat*.

## 2. Evolution of the Mansabdari system:

The concept of mansab surely goes back to Chengiz Khan who divided the army in to number grades from 10 to 10,000. The trend was then to divide the army in the number of 100 or *yuz-bashi* or 1000 or *hazara*. This was not the general pattern. This number denoted the rank and not the number of troop controlled by the person. In actual case the troop could have been even as low as one tenth of it. The Lodis and Surs had nobles holding ranks of 20,000, 10,000 or 5000 sawars. The actual number of horses maintained by this number was not known. Thus the division of the services from 10 to 5000 into regular designated hierarchy of grades was a unique contribution for which credit has to be given to none other than Akbar.

Generally it is believed that the *mansabdari* system came into being in the eleventh year of Akbar's reign that is in the year 1567. Abul Fazl though designates a rank also for Bairam Khan who died much before that. Thus it can be said for all surety that Abul Fazl actually wanted to mean the position of Bairam Khan in the empire thus mansab actually designated the socio economic position of the noble by all means. Interestingly the other historians of the time does not designate any mansab rank to anyone before 1567 including Nizamuddin who himself was a *bakshi*.

It is difficult to ascertain the number of horses maintained by the noble as the *jama* during the period was much inflated. As the state ensured the *hasil* or realisation from the cultivators and the cultivation knowledge improved the state took every measure to ascertain the number of horses actually maintained by the nobles.

The actual number of horses maintained was ensured by the *dagh* system. This was ensured in the eighteenth year in 1573-74. The *dagh* system implied that the descriptive roll of every soldier entertained by the mansabdar was noted, and the number and quality of the horses were periodically inspected. The failure of this measures was punishable. The confirmation of promotions also depended upon this maintenance of *dagh* system.

Badauni noted that the noble would start with a rank of 20 as he himself started and after he could produce those twenty horsemen and after that could be promoted to the rank of 100 mansab. If he could raise his muster up to that number and get it branded through the *dagh* system he could attain a mansab of 1000 or 2000 and even higher.

The nobility resisted the *dagh* system as long as they could. Thus the *vakils*, like Munim Khan and Muzaffar Khan reluctant to produce their contingent for the brand. Even in the initial years Mirza Aziz Koka was put under surveillance for refusing to implement the measure. The *dagh* system peculiarly entrusted enormous power in the hands of the junior officials who sometimes used it to harass even senior and respectable nobles. Some of the *diwans* also adopted harsh measures which resulted in serious rebellion in Bengal and Bihar in 1580. Akbar personally intervened to pacify the nobles and bring the situation under control.

In spite of the strict *dagh* system or branding it was reported that the nobles did not maintain the number of *sawars* or horsemen they were assigned to maintain. Badauni reports that he himself failed to maintain the *sawar* rank like his fellowmen. There was a trend of borrowing of *sawars* and after the inspection they would be dismissed. Thus in this process they kept the *jagirs* and the revenues of which were assigned to them in lieu of the salaries of the troops and their own expenses. It has to be kept in mind that the empire was too large and diverse. The vigil of the state though very strict could not encompass the whole empire and it somehow fell inadequate. Moreover the system of scrupulous means was so deep rooted that it was practically impossible for the state to ensure a fullproof system.

### **3. Concept of *Zat* and *Sawar* Ranks:**

The above reasons led to the introduction of *zat* and *sawar* system or the dual rank system in the 40<sup>th</sup> year in the 1595-96. According to this system the *mansabdars* were divided into three categories. The first category included those who maintained equal number of *sawars* equal to their *mansab*. The second category included those who maintained half or more than half the *sawar* but less than equal to their *mansab* rank. The third category included those who maintained less than half the *sawar* to their *mansab* rank. This categorisation was mentioned by Abul Fazl in his official account.

It was during this time that the term *zat* came to use designating personal rank. Thus in the 41<sup>st</sup> year Abul Fazl mentions that the rank of Mirza Shahrukh was enhanced and pay assignment made to him for 500 *zat*, with half the *sawars*.

The term *zat* and *sawar* has been very intriguing to the historians. It was then realised that the *mansabdari* system evolved with time. The pre 1594-95 phase was different when there was only one rank. Post 1594-95 in the dual rank system one has to understand that the *zat* was the personal rank of the noble and it indicated his pay and status. The *sawar* rank was the number of horses the noble had to maintain or expected to maintain. Thus a *mansabdar* of 4000 *zat* maintaining 2000 horses was definitely higher than the *mansabdar* maintaining 3000 *zat* and 3000 *sawar*.

The *zat* rank also indicated the number of horses, elephants and beasts of burden and carts a *mansabdar* was expected to maintain. Thus it is seen that a 5000 *zat* *mansabdar* would maintain 340 horses, 100 elephants, 140 camels, 100 mules and 160 carts. A *mansabdar* of 400 *zat* rank was exempted from this. This also interesting to note that the quality of the horses like, Iraqi, *Turki*, *Yabu* or mixed and *Jungla* or Indian was clearly laid down. The quality of the elephants also had to be mentioned. There is ambiguity among historian about the fact as to how these beasts of burden were maintained. Abul Fazl though mentions that the beasts of burden were also presented for *dagh* or branding.

#### **3.1 The salaries of the *zat* and *sawar*:**

The state regulated the number as well as the quality of the horses a *sawar* was expected to maintain. The rule was that a ten *sawars* would maintain twenty horses in the count of 3x3horses =9, 4x2horses =8and3x1horses =3; total 20 horses. This was called the *dah – bisti* system. This was done to ensure the mobility of the Mughal army which was always active. The second horse was need as a replacement if the mount was tired or injured or dead.

The salary was fixed as per the number of horses a *sawar* would keep and also according to the quality of the horse that he maintained. Thus a *sawar* with Iraqi horse would get Rs 30 while a *sawar* with *Turki* horse would get Rs 20 and so on.

The salary of a *sawar* during Akbar's period before the *dagh* was as follows: the Mughals, Afghans and Indian Muslims with three horses would draw Rs 25 per month if they had three horses; Rs 20 per month if they had two horses and if they had one horse then it would be Rs 15. A Rajput would get Rs 20, Rs 15 and Rs 12 consecutively in the above case. Thus the system was discriminatory. Some historians opine that this encouraged non Rajput nobles to employ Rajput *sawars*. The Mughals and Rajput nobles were allowed to employ only men drawn from their ethnic groups. The salaries were fixed after *dagh* or branding on the basis of the quality of the horses presented.

The *mansabdar* was allowed to keep 5% of the total salary of the *sawars* for his general expenses. The *jagir* awarded to the *mansabdar* was therefore a total of his *zat* salary and the salary allowed to his contingent based on his *sawar* rank.

A calculation made by Moreland suggests that a *sawar* during Akbar's period before *dagh* system would get Rs 240/-.

The salaries of the *mansabdar* would depend on which *zat* category he belonged. As mentioned earlier there were three categories of one *zat mansabdar* depending on the number of *sawars*. The salaries of the *mansabdar* or soldier were calculated in *dam*. Forty *dams* would make one rupee. Hence the revenue assessment for the purposes of grant of *jagir* was called *jamadami*.

Thus the *zat* salary of a noble of 5000 of the first rank was Rs.30000 per month. If he was in the second category then he would get Rs.29000 and in the third category he would receive Rs.28000. Thus, a *mansabdar* of 1000 received Rs.8100 per month if he was in the second category and Rs.8000 if he was in the third category.

Thus, although the salaries of the *sawars* were paid for separately, a noble was rewarded in his *zat* salary if he maintained a larger contingent. The nobles had to make annual presents to the emperor and he in turn would give them more than he received. The nobles also had to incur the cost of establishment for collecting land revenue from their *jagirs*. Moreland calculated that the cost of collection from the *jagirs* did not exceed one-fourth of the salary.

The salaries compared to the time was very good and attracted men even from far off lands. The number of *mansabdars* during Akbar's period was difficult to ascertain. Abul Fazl and Nizamuddin Ahmed list only those who held *mansabs* from 500 and above. Thus the number below 500 was not given.

An estimate during the time of Jahangir given by Du Jarric list 2941 *mansabdars* from 10 to 5000. This list seems reasonable. Of these 150 or 5.1% held ranks of 2500 or above. Thus these 150 odd individuals held all the civil or military positions in the empire. This handpicked bureaucracy was very efficient but solely dependent upon the emperor and the organisation of this group was the key to the success of the smooth running of the empire.

The instability if any was because of the reason that the salary was not paid in cash. The land was always controlled by the local *zamindars* or elites and they had a clan affiliation. Thus the *jagir* allotment gave rise to more pressure on the peasantry as it is the system was coercive and exploitative. The control over the land during that time was also a matter of social status and a security for payment.

#### **4. The Army:**

The Mughal army consisted of cavalry, infantry, artillery, elephants and camels. There was no navy. The Mughals instead maintained a flotilla of boats which was under an Admiral or *amir – ul – bahr*. The efficiency of the army during Akbars period definitely belonged to the skilful combination of the cavalry, artillery, elephant crop and the infantry. The quality of the leadership was also exemplary which induced the needed confidence. The Mughal cavalry was worth mentioning. The ruler paid huge attention to the maintenance of this contingent and through the *dagh* system the excellence was well ensured.

The horses were mostly imported from Iraq, Iran and Arabia. The cavalry men were protected by iron helmets and other defensive armour. The horses also had their neck, chests and backs fully covered. The *sawars* were adequately armed with swords, lances and bows.

The initially di no pay for the horses or the cost of the armour of a trooper. The trooper himself had to purchase his own horses and bring it to the muster before he was granted his pay. This was the source of much harassment and corruption.

The above problem led to the introduction of ad hoc pay or *barawardi*. This was adjusted when the full pay was granted to the *sawars* after the muster. This again led to another kind of corruption where the nobles would delay the muster and enjoy the ad hoc pay and maintain the nominal force and draw the full *barawardi* salaries for the full contingent. In some cases, the sate directly employed soldiers and sent them to high *mansabdars*. Such troopers were called *dakhili*.

In this regard mention should be made of the Ahadis. They were known as the gentlemen troopers. They usually had five horses or more and a separate muster was maintained by them. A separate diwan would maintain their account. They could be appointed anywhere in the army or even served as messengers. On some occasions, they could even be appointed with a mansabdar.

#### **4.1 The Artillery in the Mughal troop:**

The artillery had developed rapidly in India after the advent of Babur. The siege guns were introduced along with heavy guns mounted on forts. The siege guns were not easily manoeuvrable and elephants and huge number of bullocks were used to transport them. They were slow in firing and was not convenient during war. The existence of it was more of a visual impact.

Apart from heavy artillery there were several types of light artillery. If carried on the back of a human it was called *narnal*. If it was carried on the back of the elephant it was called *gajal*. If it was carried on the back of the camel it was called *shutrnal*. These were light swivel guns. The camels were trained accordingly and they lowered themselves during firing.

The battle of Panipat in 1526 used guns on wheel carriages known as *arraba*. It is believed that guns on wheel carriage existed before the advent of Mughals.

Transportation of the guns were much of a hassle and thus a gun was devised which could be carried in pieces. Wheel carriages for gun were improved. Guns that could be fired simultaneously were devised. Akbar personally took interest in hand muskets and thus the quality of it greatly improved. The match locks were three feet long. The barrels of the hand guns could be cleaned by a device by means of a machine drawn by an ox.

Elephantry and infantry and other ancillaries in use :

Thousands of elephants were used in the war. All the elephants again was branded. They carried the nobles and arms and materials of war. They also formed the shield during war. Their use also posed problems as they could move backward if surrounded by hostile cavalry.

The Infantry consisted of both fighting and non-fighting classes. The *bandukchis* were fighting men. They had separate organization with clerks, a treasurer and darogah. They were again subdivided into many groups and their salaries would range from 110 dam to 300 dam.

The *dakhili* soldiers recruited and directly paid for by the central government and handed over to high *mansabdars* were foot soldiers and matchlock men. A quarter of the fighting force consisted of bearers of match locks, carpenters, black smiths, water carriers and pioneers who cleared the way.

The army was also helped by runners for carrying messages, *palki* bearers, wrestlers, slaves. They helped the army but was never a part of it. Added to these ancillaries there were spies and palace guards.

## 5. Summary:

The Mughal army was a complex system but very modern compared to the time. It is difficult to assess the strength of this army by any means. The cavalry force both central and provided by the regional nobles must have been over a lakh. The strength of the infantry and artillery is difficult to envisage. The strength of the army again depended on the astute intelligence of the emperor and the administration of the state. The army definitely was the backbone of the empire. Constant improvement in technology during this period definitely added to the advantage for the excellence of the army.