

How did the Mughals try to Organize their Fiscal Administration in order to Rationalize and Systematize the Relationship between the State and the Agrarian System?

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The Mughals fiscal administration was more or less based on the land revenue system. Land revenue was the prime source of the income to the state as derived from the different source of the medieval times. The existence of various types of landed interest was the result of a long process of several centuries. By the close of 12th century, a pyramidal structure had already been established in agrarian relation.¹ In a country as large and diverse as India, governance means a welter of institutional and customary arrangements particularly in the agrarian sector. In India the agrarian governance involved, in for alia- the consolidation of private property and transaction based on contractual obligation.² The relationship between the state and the agrarian system mainly confined to the zamindars as they played a vital role in political, economic and cultural life of medieval India.³

With the coming of medieval times there was boom in agricultural sectors and the entire revenue generated by state was depended on the 'surplus' inquired in that agricultural system. The surplus of agricultural production was shared among the emperor, his nobles and the zamindars. The state and zamindars struggle for the greater share of produce, both also became partners of economic exploitation.

The word 'zamindar' gained currency during the Mughal period. It was used to denote the various holders of hereditary interest ranging from powerful independent and autonomous chieftains to petty intermediaries at village level.⁴ The big zamindars were known as raja, rais, thakurs while the small ones called themselves as chaudharis, khot, muqaddam etc. The zamindars and their rights were present in both the Khalisa and the Jagir land, means there was not single tact of land where zamindars were absent. Zamindari class can be further sub- divided into 3 sub- class i.e. autonomous chieftains, intermediary zamindars and the primary zamindars. Autonomous chieftains zamindars enjoyed sovereign power as they accepted the sovereignty of emperor and also pays annual tribute i.e. peshkash and military assistance in need.

The state was always in need of elements for controlling chieftains or big zamindars, there are certain methods adopted by the Mughals to bolster the control over the revenue collector class and facilitate their economic growth.

- The process of sharing of Mansab posts and inducting these zamindars in administrative machinery. As this policy resolved to an appreciable degree of basic contradiction between the state and the collector class and it made more fruitful for the collector class to seek promotion in the imperial yoke and attempt to expand their territory in defiance of imperial authority. It also helps the Mughal state to deepen its root of empire,

maintain the large army and strengthen Mughal administration.

- The empire of Mughals slowly develops 'paramountcy' upon these chieftains as the law of primogeniture and hereditary rights were there but the Mughals asserted the right of 'recognizing' the new princes of these chieftain royal rooms.
- The Mughal also strengthen their control on these chieftains by developing the matrimonial alliances which further strengthened the sense of attachment.
- The Mughals insistence that the chiefs should remain in attendance at the court of they themselves held posts elsewhere which further helped to consolidate the imperial hold over the chief.⁵
- Military obligation and participation of these class in annual check, while at the time of branding of horses and hulia were also considered as check as well as military enhancement of Mughal empire.
- The Mughals controlled and compelled the autonomous chief to conform to imperial regulation, especially in regard to the maintenance of law and order and the freedom of transit.

The chieftains class also called watan Jagirdars. As they were subject to imperial revenue regulation but exercised Jagirdari rights in hereditary succession over their territories, which were consequently immune from transfer.

The payment of tribute on irregular bases i.e peshkash and the fixing the amount of peshkash, the Mughals tried to obtain data regarding the area under cultivation, the crop pattern and the revenue realized by the chiefs from their vassals or sub- ordinate zamindars. Administratively it tended to bring the land revenue system of the chiefs in line with the Mughal pattern.⁶

A centralized empire {Mughals} gave greater peace and security thus enabling trade and commerce to expand and by this it led to increment and diversification of the purchasing power of the consuming classes which further led to the development of industries and brought condition which was favorable to the growth of a money economy.⁷

The emergence of money economy began to affect agricultural production to a considerable extent especially because of revenue was being realized more and more in cash .it also led to the expansion of cash crops and the extension of the cultivated area. Further it resulted in the demand of greater revenue.

The zamindars which acted as a sandwiched between the state and peasants were the actual collectors of the revenues. They were of many types i.e. taluqdars, desh mukha, desais,

deshpandes etc. The tussle was always between these class and states for the share in revenue as the zamindars who paid the revenue forcibly were called zor-talab zamindars. The Mughals controlled these Zamindars by frequent transfer, the practice of revenue farming or the letting of contract to someone else to collect the revenue which was also called Ijaradari system. The primary zamindars were for all practical purpose the holders of proprietary lands.⁹ The right of these zamindars were hereditary and alienable. The zamindars were deemed to be the malguzars or those on whom land revenue was assessed by the state. They were also expected to collect the revenue from the peasant and deposit the share of the state with the higher authorities. Thus, there emerged not only a variety of land rights but also a kind of pyramidal structure in agrarian relations where in rights of various kinds were superimposed upon each other.

In the European context absolute monarchies introduced standing armies, a permanent bureaucracy, national taxation, a codified law and the beginning of a unified market.¹⁰ On the agrarian front cohesive, powerful and more consolidated rural magnate-gentries took advantage of the political decentralization of the fifteenth century and pressed for critical economic leverage and so there was an actual need for bringing the under an imperial frame of governance. One important aspect of state's fiscal administration was of agrarian governance - a conscious policy the state to ensure effective control over north Indian agrarian structures through a strategy which implies facilitating agrarian stability by ensuring the slow compliance from powerful landed potentates and to enable surplus appropriation in cash from this class - the ubiquitous zamindars.¹¹

Since the existence of powerful social groups and communities would create difficulty for a full-scale centralisation of authority so instead of that the state opted for a combination of paternalism, patrimonialism and semi-bureaucratic norms of governance. The Mughal state performed an important provisioning function; since there was

a whole range of ruling class in form of mansabdars, state made its primary function for to provide for its upkeep thereby provisioning the capital city as well as other provincial cities, garrison towns where the ruling class resided, meeting the requirements of the army, collecting and regulating taxes and maintaining a steady supply of revenue : these were primary concerns of state policy.

Agrarian expansion was occurring and was in hands of these gentries who managed and thereby controlled all agrarian affairs in which there was a greater scope for expansion owing to the availability of large tracts of forest land and also abundance of wastelands in form of barren lands, pasture grounds etc. So, the imperial state yearned to setup effective system of measuring the area under cultivation (*arazi*) and to establish certain revenue rates depending on various variables adjusted according to the measurement of cultivated land and produce procured from that piece of land. So, the state in order to work out this, took initiative and devised new techniques for cooperation between itself and various native, autonomous, regional agrarian powers in order to reap benefits from expanding agricultural opportunities under its rule. In this way the state managed to extract high levels of agrarian surpluses and to ensure certain degree of political and social acceptability within diverse demographic and socio-cultural milieu.¹²

Tax assignments system fell regressively on society and caused extensive immiseration and subverted 'superior cultivation'.¹³ To sum-up I would like to point the officers of Mughals who were inducted themselves in the collection of revenues or by which the dream of Mughal fiscal system cannot be seen these were the Qanungos, Diwan, Patwari and Amils. The entire work of revenue collection in according to Dahsala system and pre-Dahsala system was shouldered on these officials. The role of Mansabdar and Jagirdar to facilitate these officials were also much more important. The state acted as a catalytic element which makes the reaction of the agrarian system and fiscal system to the zenith.

End notes

- 1 Nurul Hasan, 'Zamindars Under the Mughals', in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed), *The Mughal State* (chapter 9)p.136
- 2 Datta, Rajat, 'Governing Agrarian Diversities: The State and the Making of an Early Modern Economy in Sixteenth Century Northern India', *The Medieval history journal* . Vol.16, no.1, October 2013,p.473
- 3 Nurul Hasan, 'Zamindars Under the Mughals', in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed), *The Mughal State* (chapter 9)p.136
- 4 Ibid pp-137
- 5 Ibid pp-137
- 6 Ibid pp-142
- 7 Datta, Rajat, 'Governing Agrarian Diversities: The State and the Making of an Early Modern Economy in Sixteenth Century Northern India', *The Medieval history journal* . Vol.16, no.1, October 2013,p.479
- 8 Nurul Hasan, 'Zamindars Under the Mughals', in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed), *The Mughal State* (chapter 9)p.145
- 9 Ibid
- 10 Ibid pp-151
- 11 Datta, Rajat, 'Governing Agrarian Diversities: The State and the Making of an Early Modern Economy in Sixteenth Century Northern India', *The Medieval history journal* . Vol.16, no.1, October 2013,
- 12 Ibid
- 13 Ibid

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2. Grover, B.R, 'Classification of Agrarian Land Under Akbar', in Satish Chandra (ed.), *Essays in Medieval Indian Economic History* (chapter- iii)

3. Habib, Irfan, Agrarian System of Mughal India (chapter-vi)
4. Moreland, W.H. *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, (ch-iv)
5. Nural Hasan, 'Zamindars Under the Mughals', in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed) *The Mughal State* (ch-ix)