

Analytical Appraisal of Mughal's Military Management

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The Mughals had a sound military administration.¹ According to which three types of forces were maintained. Firstly, the contingents which were high official Hindu or Muslim from the governor downwards, had to maintain in accordance with his rank. This was a part of the regular standing army of the Mughal Empire, maintained for the general defence and security of the realm. Secondly, the provincial army which consisted of the contingents of minor zamindars, were called upon to render service at the time of war. The third group of local or provincial forces consisted of cavalry, infantry and other arms mentioned in Ain-i-Akbari as the quotas allotted to the Sarkars and Mahals, stationed under Faujdars and petty Faujdars. Cantonments were set up at strategic places, such as Attock, Lahore, Sialkot, Muttan, Jammu, Nagarkot, Man, Jaswan, Kahlur, Auler, Mankot, Jasrota and Lakhanpur. The Mansabdars were granted military Jagirs in every corner of the province and they supplied contingents in the time of war. These Jagirdars had greatly helped the Mughal emperors and eventually developed into petty chiefs. Apart from the Jagirdar, there were Faujdars of the forts, who maintained peace and law and order in their respective localities, kept the roads free from robbers and thieves and enforced imperial regulations. They held a small force under them to perform police duties, to put down small rebellions, disperse or arrest robber gangs, take cognizance of all violent crimes, and make demonstration of force to overcome opposition to the revenue authorities or the criminal judge or the censor.

There are sufficient evidences that the infantry consisted of Banduqchis or gunmen, Shamsherbaz or swordsmen Darbans or porters, khidmatyas or guards of the environs of the imperial palace, Pehalwans or wrestlers and Kahars or Doli-bearers. The emperor himself acted as the commander in chief and had a number of commander's under him called sipahsalars.

The real infantry consisted of matchlock men and the archers. Akbar maintained at the court a body of twelve thousand match-lock men. Their administration was organized into a department with a registrar, a treasurer and a superintendent. There were four grades of minor officers who were paid salaries varying from two hundred and sixty dams to three hundred dams. The soldiers were divided into fifteen graders, three grades being classified as a class. Their salaries varied from one hundred and ten dams to two hundred and fifty dams. This provided ample room for promotion. The archers were some times more effective in the battle than the match-lock men, because the match-locks were still not very efficient. They became heated after being fired and had to be left to cool before they could be loaded again. Some infantry was also given to the Mansabdars as Dakhill troops. A fourth of such contingents consisted of match-lock men, the rest were archers.

Cavalry constituted the most magnificent part of the Mughal military system² Mansabdari system was nothing but an excellent organisation of the cavalry.³ In Europe the horse rider army had distinctive place and in the same way Mughal emperors also gave preference to cavalry. Due to mobility and their rapid action the cavalry was considered the most suitable organ for winning the war. During the Mughal period due to poor atmospheric condition the breed of Indian horse was not up to the mark and as a result the horses were brought from Kabul, Iran and Khuram. Major shyamlal say that these horses were best in their activeness in comparison to Indian horses. Due to the galloping speed of their horses the Mughals could cover at least 60 miles a day and easily they could attack on India and went back while the Rajputs could not chase them.⁴

There were two kinds of Cavalry in Mughal army. The first were Silahdar or the soldiers who used to arrange their horses, weapons and other things themselves and the other were Vagir or the soldiers who were provided horses and weapons by the state and they used light armour.

The Mansabdars, (rank-holders) were administrative officers, normally engaged in civil work, but each of them had to furnish the number of troopers of which he held the Mansab. The Mansabdari System, therefore, implies that civil officers were bound to render military service whenever they were called upon to do so. On paper there were as many as sixty-six grades of Mansabdars, but in actual practice only half the number (thirty-three). The Mansabdars were paid regular salaries from the State treasury and were required to pay the cost of their quota of horses, elephants, beasts of burden and

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carts. Their appointments, promotions, suspensions and dismissals rested with the Emperor, who enforced his regulations in respect of the Mansabdari System with great strictness. The Mansab was granted for personal ability and military merits. It was not hereditary. The sons of the Mansabdars had to start a new, independent of their fathers' services or status. In connection with the Mansabdari System there are two important terms, viz., Zat and Sawar, which have baffled the ingenuity of scholars in distinguishing between. Dr. Ishwari Prasad only approximates the truth when he says, 'The Zat was the personal rank of Mansabdar, but to this was added a number of extra horsemen for which an officer was allowed to draw extra allowance, and this was called his Sawar rank.' Besides the Mansabdars, there were some other soldiers, generally foot, known as the Dakhilis and Ahadis. The former formed a fixed number of soldiers in charge of the Mansabdars. They were paid by the State. The latter constituted a class by themselves. They were gentlemen soldiers, enlisted by the Emperor himself for his personal service.⁵

Abul Fazal in his Ain-i-Akbari mentions the salaries of troopers. Those who came from Central Asia or from Iran received a higher salary, in all probability to make it attractive for these foreigners to migrate to the subcontinent. The Muslim empires of this region always encouraged migration from Muslim lands to strengthen themselves. The foreigners were paid twenty-five rupees every month; the Indians were given twenty rupees if employed in a military capacity. These salaries were subject to a deduction of five per cent, which the Mansabdars were entitled to charge as administrative commission for overhead charges. There was a further deduction of a month's salary every year for paying the cost of the horse and other equipment given by the state until the debt was discharged. The state charged a profit of fifty per cent upon the price of the horse, but because the government purchased horses at advantageous prices, the trooper was said to have paid a fair price.

Major Shyamlal mentions that the Mughals relied upon the systems of maintaining descriptive rolls of the soldiers and branding the horses. The first was a most effective method because the officers were experts in describing the general appearance as well as the distinguishing marks of individuals; verification of troops through this process was called tashlhah. The tradition of registering descriptive rolls for certain police purposes has endured in the subcontinent and proves fairly effective even now, when, because of finger prints, the utility of the method has been diminishing for some time. The horses were branded every time they were mustered for formal inspection by the bakhshi; this was called dagh. The normal regulation was that the Mansabdar should bring his troops every year for inspection and the repetition of the brand. Fines were imposed for delays in bringing horses to the muster. If a Mansabdar made a delay, he would lose ten per cent of his salary for the period of delay. It is, however, certain that there were exceptions to this rule. The Mansabdars posts in difficult areas could not possibly comply with these regulations; sometimes it was impolitic to require a Mansabdar to leave his duties and to arrange for a muster.⁶

Artillery was the specialty of Mughals. It was Babar who used artillery in India. From time to time he made advancement in his artillery. They established many establishments for artillery. It is said that Humayun had 750 cannons and Akbar considered cannons as the most important means for the defence of the state. Akbar successfully developed big cannons like Sherdahad, Fatehlaskar etc. for more comfort and better utility the cannons were given the shape of a cart. It has been widely admitted by various scholars like Captain B.N. Maliwal, Major Shiamlal, Major R.C. Kulshreshtha & Lt. Col. Gautam Sharma that Akbar's artillery with the exceptions of Turkey, there was no country which was as well equipped with artillery as the Mughal Empire. Some of the cannons were very large and required several elephants and a thousand cattle to transport one of them. The Mughal artillery improved as the result of the contacts with the Deccan as well as with the Europeans.

Humayun had twenty-one pieces in the Battle of Qanauj; by now Sher Shah had the superiority in artillery.⁷ The Deccan had made greater advances in artillery than the North, because of the contacts with the Turks and the Persians. The best artillerymen were recognized to be the Europeans who had by now settlements on the Western coast. Abu-'-Fadl recognizes the importance of artillery.⁸ The guns were "carefully distributed over the entire empire, each province being supplied with the suitable variety of pieces". Artillery was considered necessary for "the siege of fortresses and naval actions. The artillery was in the charge of the Mir-i-Atish or Daroga-i-Topkhana (supdt. of ordnance department). There was Daroghah and Mushrif, the former assisted

the Mir Atish in his executive duties and latter was an accountant and record keeper; the Daroghah was a Mansabdar. As far as the technique of Mughal artillery is concerned we find that it was advanced. The artillery of Mughals became the major force for them because Indian kings did not have cannons. In reality the horrible sound of the cannons of Mughals terrifies the Indian soldiers. Some important artillery of Mughal period which were very familiar among civilian and military sphere were "Gazikhan", "Sher Dahad", "Dhum Dhum", "Fatehhaskar" and "Jahankusha"⁹.

The Mughal Empire had maintained naval force. The great Akbar maintained a well organised fleet in order to defend the coasts against the Mughals of Arakan and the Portuguese from Mundalgarh. The naval department was placed in charge of an officer called Amir-ul-Bahr, or Admiral whose fourfold duties was to provide vessels capable of carrying elephants; to appoint expert seamen skilled in diagnosing the temper of the sea; to guard the rivers and to superintend the imposition, the realisation and remission of tolls and duties. Naval batteries were installed and sailors were recruited from the sea-faring tribes. Allahabad, Lahore, Kashmir, Bengal and Thatta (on the bank of river Indus) were main ship building industries received proper attention during great Mughals.

Apart from these parts of imperial army there was also an elephant corps. It was maintained in a high state of efficiency. The elephants were organised into groups of ten, twenty or thirty commonly called Halqas or circles. They were mainly used to break the walls of the fort, terrorize the enemy and carrying artillery in battle field.¹⁰ Like Rajputs Mughals also gave stress on the construction of forts to strengthen the security of his empire. They constructed many forts on important places. The Red Fort of Delhi and Agra are still famous for their beauty, safety and strength.

The Mughals constructed forts at strategic places, the principles of military architecture were well understood. The location of Forts shows advantage was invariably taken of a helpful natural feature where, as in the plains of Northern provinces, such features were not common, they were sometimes created artificially. Fortresses were generally placed near sources of water supply, a curve in a river was an asset. The fort was put upon an eminence, and if one did not happen to be in the vicinity, an artificial mound was created by piling up earth; the area from which it was excavated created another feature, that of a marsh or a lake, which was useful in defending the fort. Forts were generally surrounded with moats; outside the moats, sometimes a thick jungle of bamboo or some thorny bushes or trees was planted to delay the approach of a hostile force. If the climate was not favourable for this purpose, a veritable forest of stone blocks was planted to obstruct the cavalry. The gates were stout and barred with beams of wood or even of iron; there were sometimes several concentric walls; in any case the approach to the citadel was tortuous and long. The walls were machicolated and mounted with parapets. The forts were strong and capable of standing long sieges.

There were eleven stone forts at Bhalon, Tatarpur, Jason Balakoti, Dadial, Dadah, Rajpurpattan, Siba, Kutehar, Kheunkhera, Gangot; and there were three brick forts at Jullundur, Dasuya and Sultanpur. The total number of cavalry and infantry stationed in these forts, including 48 other small stations, was 4,155 and 79436, respectively.¹¹ There was a stone fort at Kangra and a brick fort at Pathankot. The total strength of cavalry and infantry stationed in these forts, including other 48 small stations, was 31055 and 129300, respectively.¹² Stone forts were situated at Jammu and Mankot and brick forts at Eminabad, Patti Zafarwal and Chiniot. The total strength of cavalry and infantry stationed in these forts was 6795 and 99652, respectively.¹³ There were only two brick forts situated at Khokhar (Gakhar) and Hazara. The total strength of cavalry and infantry stationed there, as well as 20 more small stations, was 3730 and 44,200, respectively.¹⁴ Stone forts were situated at Attock, Paharhala, Suburban, Kahwan, Mallot and Makhial. There was only one brick fort at Nandanpur, situated on a hill. The total strength of the cavalry and infantry

The names of the forts are not available, but the total strength of cavalry and infantry kept at the nine different 8,553 and 69700, respectively.¹⁵ There were only two brick forts situated at Islampur and Multan town and the total strength of cavalry and infantry at the 11 stations was 1410 and 17100, respectively.¹⁶ There on these frontier forts and other 33 small stations was stations in this area was 775 and 14550, respectively.¹⁷ five stations where 770 cavalry and 9500 infantry were kept.¹⁸ There were only four stations where 220 cavalry and 2000 infantry were kept.¹⁹ There were only three brick forts, situated at Dudai, Mau, and Marot. The total strength of cavalry and infantry maintained at 17 stations was 5800 and 57600, respectively.²⁰

During the reign of Akbar the local force consisted of 654480 cavalry and 426086 infantry.²¹ Discipline was the most important aspect of Mughal army and the army chiefs of Mughals used strategic offensive and tactical defensive very skillfully. They were so active that they reached the battle field before the arrival of enemy and wait for them in a perfect order.

It is remarkable to point out that the Mughal military organisation possessed certain weaknesses, which rendered it no match for the better kinds of contemporary European troops and ultimately brought about its decay. So long as Akbar was alive his personal vigour and martial qualities of the emperor maintained the army with all its short comings in a wonderful condition of efficiency, but under Jahangir and Shahjahan the inevitable deterioration set in and became so marked under Aurangzeb that Manneci asserted probably with justification, that 30000 good European soldiers could easily sweep away the authority of the Mughal and occupy the whole empire. The Mughal rulers inspected the troops from time to time with a view to ensure that the state was not defrauded. The Mughal armies were drawn up in a conventional order for battles. The ingenuity shown in earlier days by the Mughal conquerors like Babar had gradually given place to stereo typed strategy.

Undoubtedly keeping with the requirements of the time the Mughals maintained a strong military force. This was essential both for the attainment of the ambitions of carving. Out an extensive empire as well as retention of control over the territory brought under actual control.²⁸ It was therefore necessary for the Mughal rulers to raise a large army and keep it in a state of perfect readiness. This work was first initiated by Akbar while his successors kept the reformed machinery intact making only a few changes here and there.²³

Frankly speaking, Mughals adopted whatever they thought was useful to them. They were circumscribed by their confidence in their resources and power. They failed to realize the danger of an expanding Europe. They do not seem to have awakened to the perilous importance of the problem posed by an aggressive sea power establishing a hold on the sea washing the shores of their dominions. However, it has to be conceded that so long as Mughals remained strong, they were capable of dealing with the western intruders within the empire. Alamgir First taught the English a good lesson which led them to forget for some time their dreams of an Indian Empire. Earlier Shahjahan had dealt effectively with the Portuguese pirates in Bengal despite the difficulty of the delta terrain for land forces. The Mughal Empire was sufficiently strong to deal with the smaller states within the sub continent and to quell rebellions if they did not become general conflagrations.

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