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History of India V (c.1550-1605)

Topic: Akbar's Administration

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Akbar Administrative System

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Central Administrative System

- Akbar's system of Central administration was a combination of Persian, Central Asian and Indian traditions. Its working and other details are mentioned in the literary work *Ain - i - Akbari* by Abul Fazi.
- To join all provinces in the vast empire into a small unit a central government was set up . The emperor was extremely powerful his decision on all matters the most for eg- military , politics etc . His word was law and he was the commander - in - Chief of the armed forces. [?] He was assisted by a team of ministers and officials.
- The promotion or dismissal of any member was the sole right of the emperor .
- The success of this system was depended largely on the personality and his wisdom to choose the correct person for the correct job .

- His council of ministers was composed of –
- The Wazir or Diwan - head of the revenue department. He was responsible for all income and expenditure and held control over khalisa , jagir and inam lands.
- The Mir Bhakshi - head of the military department and the paymasters of all mansabdars.
- The Qazi - chief judge and the chief sardar and the supervisor of the royal household.
- The Wakil or Prime Minister - did not exercise any effective authority. He was only a ceremonial head.
- Akbar held regular meetings with his senior officers in the Diwan-i-khas . He considered himself as the guardian of his subjects .
- He would meet them in the Diwan-i-Aam where he would receive petitions , listen to their problems and solve many cases on the spot.

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

- The vast empire was divided into 15 provinces or subas. A governor or subedar was placed in charge of each province who was the leader of both military and civil affairs.
- The Diwan kept the records of the land revenues. The Diwan and the subedar kept a close watch on each other. The provinces were further subdivide into districts or sarkars which were further subdivided into small units of administration called 'Parghana'.
- Each of these units had a team of government officials managing their affairs and reporting to the corresponding officials at the level immediately above them. The villages were looked after by panchayats.

UNIFORM WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

- Before Akbar's reign, weights and measure system varied from region to region and commodity to commodity.
- The weights were based on the weights of various seeds and lengths were based on the length of arms and width of fingers.
- Akbar adopted barley corn for the weight and for linear measurement he introduced the Illahi Gaz (yard).
- **Three Standard Gaz Depending On The Objects To Be Measured:**
- Long Gaz to measure long distances, forts and roads. [?]
- Middle Gaz to measure stone houses, temples and gardens.
- Short Gaz to measure garments, table linen etc.

REVENUE SYSTEM

- Land was measured with a bamboo jarib joined together with iron rings instead of the hemp rope used before.
- • The average produce and the average price over 10 years was calculated.
- • One third of the produce was the king's share, it could be paid in cash or kind, though cash was preferred.
- • The revenue officers were instructed to treat the peasants well.
- • If the crops failed due to drought or flood , the state of remission of revenue.
- • Loans could be paid back in easy installments were advanced to the peasants to buy seeds, cattle and implements

REVENUE SYSTEM

- Akbar adopted the basic structure of Sher shah's revenue system, which continued till 1585.
- • With the help of his revenue minister, Todar Mal, he introduced some important land reform system, known as Todar Mal's bandobast or settlement.
- • It was also known as the Zabti or dahsala system. Land was surveyed and measured.
- • The land was classified into four categories on the basis of regularly cultivated and occasionally cultivated.
- • For instance, Polaj was the land which was cultivated every year and never to be left fallow, whereas Parauti was the land which had to be left fallow for a time to enable it to recover its fertility.

MANSABDARI SYSTEM

- The term means holding a particular rank in the administration.
- The Mughal administration was essentially a military one. Under this system every official was given a rank according to the nature of the job.
- Those who joined Mughal service were enrolled as mansabdars and were given a rank, known as the Mansab.
- Each rank was further divided into two – zat and sawar. Zat rank meant the personal status and salary due to him.
- Sawar rank indicated the number of cavalymen (sawars) a mansabdar required to maintain.
- The lowest rank was that of an officer in charge of 10 horsemen and the highest rank was that of an officer in charge of 7000 horsemen.
- The mansabdars were appointed, promoted and dismissed by the emperor. A mansab or rank was not hereditary. After the death the jagirs reverted to the king who granted it to someone else.

MANSABDARI SYSTEM

- Mansabdars were given salary in accordance to their jobs .
- They were later paid in form of jagirs somewhat like iqtas. But unlike iqtadars, most mansabdars did not actually administer their jagirs.
- They only had right to the revenue of their assignments which was collected for them by their servants while the mansabdars themselves served in other part of the empire.
- The average salary of a sawar was Rs. 20 per month and that of an infantryman was about Rs.3 per month.

MILITARY REFORMS:

- The system of branding horses and maintaining a descriptive roll of soldiers was adopted by Akbar.
- Akbar also maintained a standing army .
- The cavalry was the most important branch of the Mughal troops .
- The troops were mainly supplied by the mansabdars .
- The emperor also maintained a battalion of royal and trusted soldiers .
- He also maintained corps of royal bodyguard and a large number of war elephants and a well organised artillery.

TRADE

- • Trade was another source of revenue though much less in compared to land .
- • The main components of export were spices, indigo, textiles and saltpeter .
- • India traded with China ,central Asia and Europe .
- • The Portuguese established trade centers on the western coast during Akbar's reign.

RELIGIOUS POLICIES

- Akbar followed a policy of religious tolerance and believed in administering equal justice to the followers of all religion.
- He wanted to unite the diverse races of India into one nation. He took a number of measures and laid the foundation of an empire based on equal rights to all citizens, irrespective of their religious beliefs.
- He abolished jizya, the tax which the non - Muslims were required to pay and the pilgrim tax on bathing at the holy places such as Prayag and Banaras. He treated all his subjects equally, gave high posts according to merit without any distinction of caste, creed or religion.
- He married Rajput princesses and allowed them freedom to practice their own faith. He also allowed them to celebrate Diwali and Holi and himself used to take part in these festivals.
- He gave land grants to persons of merit irrespective of their religious beliefs.

RELIGIOUS POLICIES

- **IBADAT KHANA**
- Akbar wanted to create the spirit of love and brotherhood among the people of all religions. In 1575, he build a hall called the Ibadat Khana or the hall of prayer at his capital, Fatehpur Sikri.
- Religious and spiritual topics were discussed every Thursday in this hall.
- At first, these discussions were confined to the followers of Islam only but later on, it was opened to people of all religion – Christians, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Jains and even atheists.
- In 1579, Akbar decided to take into his own hands all religious matters and issued a ‘Declaration’ or ‘mahzar’. This declaration made Akbar the supreme religious head of the Muslims.

RELIGIOUS POLICIES

- **DIN-I-ILAHI**
- The comparative study of different religions at the Ibadat Khana led Akbar to form the Din-i-Ilahi (meaning 'divine faith) in 1582.
- The new faith included the good points of all religions.
- It believed in one Supreme God.
- The basic purpose of the formation of Din-i-Ilahi was Sulh-i-kul or universal harmony.
- The idea of tolerance in this faith did not discriminate between people of different religions. It focused on a system of ethics like justice, peace, honesty etc.' which were universally applicable.

DIN-I-ILLAHI

- There were no sacred books, no priests, no temples or rituals in the new faith.
- The members of the faith were to follow a code of conduct which included – a) Not to eat meat, at least in the month of their birth. b) To give alms on their birthday. c) To do good to everybody. Akbar did not use force nor money to make people accept the faith. Hence, very few people joined it and with Akbar's death, Din-i-illahi.

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

- Akbar introduced a number of social and educational reforms.
- He abolished sati and legalised widow remarriage.
- He raised the age of marriage to 14 for girls and 16 for boys.
- He restricted the sale of wine and spirits.
- He revised the educational syllabus and laid more stress on moral education and on secular subjects rather than on religion and theology.
- He set up a translation department for translating works in Sanskrit, Arabic and Greek.

CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- Akbar was a patron of art and literature.
- Though he did not receive any formal education during his childhood he was a versatile genius.
- He encouraged the study of astronomy, mathematics, logic and history.
- It is said that his library had more than 4000 manuscripts.
- He could understand the fine points of poetry, art, religion and philosophy.

NAVRATNAS

- Akbar's court was adorned by nine distinguished men from different fields. They were called the 'navratnas' and included:
- Abul Fazl, who wrote Akbar Nama and Ain- i – Akbari.
- Faizi, who translated the Mahabharata and Ramayana into Persian.
- Abdul Rahim Khan - i – Khana, famous for his dohas.
- Todar Mal, his revenue minister.
- Man Singh, his military general.
- Birbal, his constant companion, famous for his intelligence and sharp wit.
- Tansen, the great singer and musician, he is said to have composed Raga Darbari in Akbar's honour.
- Fakir Aziao-Din, a mystic and one of Akbar's chief advisors.
- Mulla Do Piazza, a scholar known for his wit.

- During the reign of Akbar, painting was organised in royal karkhanas, where painters from different parts of the country used to make beautiful paintings.
- These artists blended the Persian and Indian styles of painting.
- The scenes depicted in these paintings included hunting and court scenes in peacock blue and red colours.
- Paintings were also used to illustrating Persian books. The most important work is Dastan-i- Amir Hamza or Humzanama, which has about 1200 paintings.
- Jaswant and Daswant were the two famous painters of Akbar's court.

CONCLUSION

- LAST DAYS OF AKBAR –
- The last days of Akbar were spent in grief. His two sons, Murad and Danyal died. His only surviving son Salim rebelled against him. However, shortly before his death in 1605, Akbar himself nominated Salim as his successor.
- Akbar is regarded as one of the greatest rulers of India. He built a vast empire and gave the empire political and administrative unity. He restored to war only when all the other means failed. He did a great service to the nation by bringing about religious unity. He promoted art, architecture, literature, music and painting and gave them unique Indian colour.