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Mughal Dynasty of India and Patrimonial Bureaucracy

The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire

The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire is a pre-modern state model. As an ideal type, this model does not reflect the working of any actual state, but presents a catalogue of elements drawn from existing situations. Max Weber considers patrimonialism as a form of government centered on family structures, particularly on the authority of fathers in families. It is a form of political domination in which authority rests on the personal and bureaucratic power exercised by a royal household, where that power is formally arbitrary and under the direct control of the ruler.

The political framework of this type is taken from Max Weber's work on the concept of 'Patrimonial state' in his book *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Weber narrates that domination (authority) means the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of person. Domination (authority) is based on the most diverse motives of compliance.

The ruler of a Patrimonial state governs on the basis of personal, traditional authority whose model is the Patrimonial family. Patrimonialism or Sultanism tends to rise whenever traditional domination develops an administration and a military force which are purely personal instruments of the master. Weber has presented three types of authority for legitimate domination which are as follows:

1. Legal Authority
2. Traditional Authority
3. Charismatic Authority

1. Legal Authority

This authority is based on rational grounds which rest on a belief in the legality of the enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands.

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2. Traditional Authority

This authority is based on traditional grounds which rest on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority.

3. Charismatic Authority

This authority rests on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism and exemplary character of an individual person and of the normative patterns or order revealed and ordained by him.

The primary support of the Patrimonial power is provided by slaves (who are often branded), coloni and conscripted subjects, mercenary body guards and armies (patrimonial troops). To govern successfully, a Patrimonial ruler must have at his disposal a body of loyal and disciplined soldiers. Patrimonial armies were made up of troops whose primary allegiance is to an individual person or an office. In Patrimonial kingdom, armies grew large and complex. The armies of the Patrimonial-bureaucratic emperors split into two groups: the private household troops of the emperor and the soldiers of major subordinates.

Patrimonialism is primarily based on traditional domination. The Patrimonial retainer may receive his support in any of the following ways :

- a. living from the lord's table
- b. allowances
- c. rights of land used in return for services ("Service-Land")
- d. the appropriation of property income, fees or taxes
- e. fiefs

The Mughal dynasty will be studied and analyzed under the Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire model in the following chapters with focus on mansabdari system as a political structure.

Dynastic norms profoundly shaped early medieval politics. They paved the way for every major political struggle of the period. Nearly all of the Sultans of Delhi Sultanate were dynastic rulers set on consolidating and expanding their domains. They sought to incorporate new territories and enhance their position by prosecuting their dynastic

claims. They conducted diplomacy through marriage and negotiations over inheritance rights.

Early medieval dynasties involved a number of basic elements. Individuals ruled territorial holdings, often, by virtue of occupying titular positions such as 'wazir,' 'commander-in-chief,' and 'king.' They held those positions as a result of patterns of marriage and inheritance. Dynastic claims were, more or less, considered to be perpetual and inalienable.

A new age of Muslim rule in the subcontinent began with the arrival of the Mughals; Babur had finally succeeded in conquering Delhi. Amir Timur (8 April 1336 – 18 February 1405), also known as Tamerlane, was a 14th century conqueror of much of Central Asia, and founder of the Timurid Empire (1370–1405) in Central Asia, which survived until 1857 as the Mughal Empire of India.

Amir Taimur had four sons and his eldest son Ghiyath-ud-Din Jahangir Mirza died in 1375 AD during his life time. Jahangir Mirza had two sons namely Muhammad Sultan and Pir Muhammad, the former early died in his father's lifetime. Amir Taimur made a will in favour of his grandson Pir Muhammad. Pir Muhammad was a brave and responsible man. When Amir Taimur marched against India, his grandson Pir Muhammad was with him. During his absence, Amir Taimur appointed his third son Jalal-al-Din Miran Shah Mirza as the incharge of the dominion from whom Babur descended.

Amir Taimur died in 1405 and after his death Central Asian Empire was divided among all the Taimurid princes. There was none capable of consolidating their common heritage. Jalal-al-Din Miran Shah Mirza became the ruler of Azerbaijan, Syria and Iraq. After his death, he was succeeded by his son Sultan Muhammad Mirza amongst his two sons, Sultan Abu Sai'd Mirza and Manuchihar Mirza.

The former succeeded his father and became Sultan in 1451. Abu Sai'd Mirza was a powerful prince. He expanded his kingdom over Khurarsan, Makran and Indus. However after his death, his kingdom was broken into pieces and his four sons became independent princes. Umer Shaikh Mirza continued to rule the small kingdom of Farghana, which he had governed in the life time of his father. He was an ambitious ruler. He made repeated attempts to conquer Samarqand but all in vain and he was not able to get hold of Samarqand back in his hands. His rule lasted till his death on 8th June, 1494. He left behind

three sons and five daughters. Zahir-al-Din Muhammad Babur the eldest of the three, succeeded his father as the new ruler of Farghana.

Babur was born on 14th February, 1483 at Andijan in Farghana. Babur's lineage was descended from two of the greatest generals from Central Asia. From the paternal side, he was the grandson of Sultan Abu Sai'd Mirza of Heart, a great grandson of Taimur, the legendary Tartar hero. From his mother's side, his grandfather was Yunus Khan of Tashkent, the Great Khan of Mongols and the thirteenth in the direct line of descent from Chingiz Khan. The political chaos and disintegration of local Indian rulers gave an opportunity to Babur for an attack on India. The local petty rulers invited Babur to invade Indian peninsula and this was a golden chance for Babur to utilize his potentials in a new territory against Indians. Babur was in better position to counter the local Indian untrained army having the experience of fights and battles with Uzbeks in Central Asia. The dynasty founded by Babur styled itself the 'House of Timur', in spite of being popularly known as 'Mughal'. It is ironic that the dynasty that Babur founded was known as 'Mughal' because he was of mainly Turkish stock and also preferred to call him a Turk. His greatest ambition was to rule Samarkand. He fought many battles in the pursuit of this goal, winning and losing his kingdom many times in the process.

Babur ruled India for a brief period of four years and that too was spent mainly in military campaigns. Babur established his rule in India after defeating Ibrahim Lodhi on 21 April 1526 in the famous first battle of Panipat. The next problem of Babur was Rana Sangram known as Rana Sanga of Mewar who was a permanent threat to Babur's rule. At the Battlefield of Khanua on 16 March 1527 Babur's troops emerged victorious and conquered the Indian territory. Babur was in search of a final move against Rajputs which was provided by Medini Rao at the battlefield of Chanderi on 29 January 1528. The last claimant of the throne was Mahmud Lodhi, Ibrahim Lodhi's brother. He was defeated by Babur on 6 May 1529. Babur's illness won over his struggle of consolidation. He died on 26 December 1530 and was buried in Char Bagh or Aram Bagh at Kabul.

The eldest son of Babur, Nasir ud-din Muhammad Humayun, was born on March 6, 1508 at Kabul to Maham Begum. He learnt Turkish, Arabic and Persian at a very young age from his mother and Maulana Masliuddin Ruhulla. He had three younger brothers, Kamran, Askari

and Hindal. After Babur's death in 1530, Humayun ascended the throne at Agra on 30 December 1530, at the age of twenty-two. Humayun inherited an empire captured by force and therefore the whole empire lacked the element of a consolidated civil administration. He faced numerous hostile forces and problems right from the start. He faced troubles from the Afghan nobles, the Rajputs, and the most of all from his brothers who were mean and disloyal to him. His cousins Muhammad Zaman and Muhammad Sultan were claimants of the throne. A ruler with exceptional military genius, diplomatic skills and political wisdom was the need of the hour. But Humayun lacked all of these qualities. In fact, he himself proved to be his worst enemy. Though endowed with a remarkable intellectual taste and love of culture, he was devoid of the wisdom and discretion as well as strong determination and perseverance of his father. Humayun tried to confront Sher Shah Suri (the ruler and founder of Sur dynasty who took power from the Mughals and kept Humayun away from the capital Delhi for almost fifteen years till 1555 but in vain. The first encounter between the Mughal and Afghan forces took place at Chausa on 27 June 1539. Many distinguished nobles and dignitaries of royal family perished and died on this fateful day and some of the nobles altered their loyalties as well. A conclusive hit by Sher Shah was stroked on Humayun's rule and the Mughal troops on 17 May 1540 at Qanauj. This was a bitter blow to Humayun's hopes. He was not strong enough to fight again in battlefield. Humayun spent the next fifteen years in exile in Sindh, Persia (Iran), and then Afghanistan.

Humayun left India to take refuge under Shah Hussain of Persia, marching with forty men and his wife and her companion through mountains and valleys. During this exile, Humayun's wife, Hamida Begum, gave birth to the future emperor Akbar at Umarkot Fort in Sind on 15 October 1542. The Persian emperor Shah Tahmasp deputed his brother Bahram Mirza to escort Humayun and provided him with moral and financial support on his conversion from Sunni to Shia Islam. With this Persian aid Humayun took Kandahar from Askari after a two-week siege and Kabul from his brother Kamran.

After conquering Kabul and Kandahar from his brothers, Humayun moved towards India, his lost territory and throne. Humayun's opponent Sher Shah Suri died in 1545 and his successors were weak enough to control state affairs. The incapable successors of Sher Shah lost India at the hands of Humayun in the field of Sirhind on 22 June 1555. Humayun entered the city of Delhi on 23 July 1555 after

fifteen years of exile. The House of Timur was once again destined to rule India for the next nearly three hundred years. He fell from the stairs of his library at Din-Pannah. After remaining unconscious for two days, he breathed his last on 26 January 1556. The death was kept secret for seventeen days because of the fear of uprising. The sudden passing away of Humayun called for an action. On 14 February 1556, Akbar was crowned emperor at Kalanaur.

Interlude in Mughal Politics

Sher Shah Suri also known as Farid Khan or Sher Khan (The Tiger King or The Lion King), was a powerful medieval emperor. He was an Afghan who founded the dynasty known as Sur dynasty in Delhi in 1540. He rooted out the Mughal dynasty in Agra and his rule marked the beginning of the short lived Suri dynasty's rule in India.

He was born in 1473 in the Punjab. He was the son of Hassan Khan, a jagirdar of Sasaram, Bihar. His original name was Farid-ud-din Abul Muzaffar but was mostly called Farid. He left his home at the age of 15 due to ill-treatment of his step mother and went to Jaunpur. At Jaunpur, he studied Arabic and Persian languages. In 1522 Sher Shah joined the service of Bahar Khan Lohani the then Governor of Bihar. He was given the title of Sher Khan by Bahar Khan Lohani for the courage and gallantry shown by him in killing a tiger single-handedly. Later Bahar Khan appointed him as a deputy governor and tutor of his son Jalal Khan Lohani. The Afghan and Lohani nobles were not in favour of Sher Shah and finally he was expelled from the services. Sher Shah joined the forces of Babur in 1527. Sher Shah helped Babur in capturing Bihar. Owing to Sher Shah's services, he was appointed as Deputy Governor of Bihar in 1528 after the death of Bahar Khan Lohani.

The incapability of Humayun paved the way for Sher Shah to conquer the nearby areas. At the Battle of Chausa on June 26, 1539, he defeated the Mughal emperor Humayun and assumed the royal title of Farid al-Din Sher Shah. After the victory in Chausa, Sher Shah declared himself ruler of Bengal and Bihar in 1539. Sher Shah had ambition to sit on the throne of Delhi which was his long awaited dream. Humayun again collected forces and reached the place of Kanauj, situated on the banks of river Ganges. The long delay of attack on Sher Shah went against Humayun and he lost the battle at Kanauj in 1540. Sher Shah finally sat on the throne of Delhi. Sher Shah was not only a great conqueror but also an excellent administrator. He was a

benevolent despot and not an autocratic king. He took keen interest in setting up a new administrative structure. He introduced many reforms which were greatly appreciated and had their own significance during those days such as Barid (postal) system, Espionage system, Welfare system and Revenue system etc. Sher Shah ruled for a short period of five years in which he not only consolidated his power but also brought about important reforms. He died on 23 May 1545 from a gunpowder explosion. He was a practical and farsighted ruler who was way ahead of his contemporaries.

Administration of the Indian Rulers

The term administration can be employed in two senses, in its broadest sense it transpires the work involved in the actual conduct of governmental affairs and in its narrowest connotation it expresses the operation of the administrative branch only. But in its behavioural definition, it is assumed that administration is a generalized type of response to be found in all human organizations. It denotes an aspect of life in any social organization. As all social aspects are interrelated therefore administration is an integral part of human life. It is a process of directing and controlling life in any social organization. The specific function of administration is to develop and regulate the decision making process in the most effective way. Administration has groups and individuals as its functioning ingredients. The administrative structure of early Mughals and Sher Shah also needs to be discussed here before moving towards Patrimonial Bureaucracy.

Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty, and Humayun both had little time to set up a secure system of government in the territories conquered by them. Babur admits that his system was more Saifi (military) than Qualmi (by pen).

The nature of administration governed by Babur in Hindustan was more or less military. At the central level, there was a highly centralized administration without defined particular departments. After the Padshah, the next in the official hierarchy was Wazir. The other office at the central level was that of Bakhshi, who was in charge of the army. Beside him, there were Darogha-i-Topkhana, Sadr and Qazi. The Wajhdari system was about the revenue collection. The officers of the system were called Wajhdar. Wajhdar was responsible for the collection of the state dues and revenue within the territory assigned to him. Babur also made an attempt to revive the postal system by introducing Dak Chaukis and Sarais.

Like his father, Humayun also tried to organize administrative system in India. Humayun divided his court into three corresponding divisions: Members of the Royal family, nobles, ministers and military commanders were named Ahl-i-Daulat (men of wealth and prosperity); men of letters, religious leaders and those distinguished in the law of shariat were called Ahl-i-Sadat (men of success); while poets, singers, musicians, architects, painters etc were called Ahl-i-Murad (men of desire). Each division was presided by an appointed leader. There were twelve gradations in each division. The government departments were categorized into four elements such as 'fire', 'air', 'water' and 'earth'. Military department came under the element of fire. The Emperor's household, kitchen and stable were called air element. Irrigation came under the heading of water. Buildings, agriculture and land grants were termed as earth element.

Sher Shah was not only a great conqueror but also an excellent administrator. He took keen interest to set up the administration. He introduced many reforms which were greatly appreciated and had their own significance. He was the head of the administrative set up. He had both civil and military powers in his hands. His central administration consisted of his Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers helped him in governing the whole empire. It consisted of the following departments:

1. Diwan-i-Wizarat
2. Diwan-i-Ariz
3. Diwan-i-Rasalat
4. Diwan-i-Insha
5. Diwan-i-Qaza
6. Diwan-i-Barid

1. Diwan-i-Wizarat:

Diwan was the head of the Diwan-i-Wizarat. He supervised income and expenditure of the state. He was head of other ministers.

2. Diwan-i-Ariz

Ariz-i-Mamalik was head of this department. He looked after the recruitment, organization and discipline of the army.

3. Diwan-i-Rasalat

This department was under a foreign minister who was in charge of the diplomatic relations with foreign countries. He was in close touch with ambassadors and envoys. He was also in charge of charity and endowment.

4. Diwan-i-Insha

The duty of this minister was to supervise the government records. He drafted royal proclamation and letters.

5. Diwan-i-Qaza

It was a judicial department. Chief Qazi was the head of this department. He had to deal with the appellate case from lower courts.

6. Diwan-i-Barid

It was the intelligence department of the government. It had many news writers and spies scattered all over the empire to collect latest news for the emperor.

In spite of this central administration, the provincial set up was totally different in nature. For administrative convenience, the empire was divided into Sarkars, Parganas and Villages.

Sarkar

Munsif-i-Munsifan (Munsif-in-Chief) and Siqdar-i-Shiqdaran (Shiqda-in-Chief) were the high officials of Sarkar. It was the important unit of the division. There were 47 Sarkars in the empire.

Pargana

It was a qasba or an aggregate of village. There were total 113,000 Parganas and 2737 qasbas in Sher Shah's empire. The hierarchy of Sher Shah's Pargana administration included Shiqda, Amin, Fetahdar, Karkun Farsi-nawis, Karkun Hindi-nawis, Qanaungo and Khazanadar. In addition to these officials, there were Patwaris, Chaudhris and Muquddams.

Village

Village was administered by Panchayat. Panchayat was composed of influential men of the village. It performed both judicial and administrative tasks in the village.

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The administrative machinery is one of the most efficient and reliable source for any ruler to rule any government. The Mughals were having this new dynastic rule in the Indian subcontinent and they had to establish an authentic system of administration on this soil. Mansabdari system under the emperor Akbar was an attempt for the same administrative system for civil and military offices.