

## MILITARY ADMINISTRATION OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INDIA- A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

So far as the military administration of any country is concern it always considered an integral and formidable part of any country. It not only reflects the might, defence but also measures the parameter of a country's indomitable strength in present days India security force is of a great continuity of our past. It not only establishes the technique of managing the safety of India but also keep the enemy eyes far off. It plays an important role in managing the public affairs in a society as it works equivalent to public administrative guidance of our civil society. Military Administration have a wide scope and can be applied in civil, political, bureaucratic affairs as all these aspects are in-separable part of any society. It acts as a crucial step for the peace and prosperity of a country.

**Keywords : military, defense, formidable, bureaucratic, prosperity**

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### 1.INTRODUCTION

Maintaining a vast army has been one of the main duties of kings since the emergence of states. Therefore, we can consider it a legacy of Indian administrations, known as military administration. Throughout history, wars have been an integral part of any administrative setup. Thus, the maintenance of a powerful force was crucial for kingdoms to suppress internal revolts, maintain law and order, and expand their territories. All of this was only possible with a strong and efficient military administration. India's rich military tradition can be seen in the historical epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. From the dawn of the Harappan civilization to the later Vedic period, rulers were familiar with simple war tactics but lacked efficient methods of maintaining armies. The rise of the Mauryan Empire in North India marked a significant development in this regard. The Mauryans categorized the army into different wings, a practice that was also followed by the Guptas and other Southern rulers.

However, it was during the medieval era that the centralization of the army became prominent. The Sultans and Mughal rulers placed emphasis on different wings of the army and assigned efficient individuals to oversee training, inspection, discipline, and payment of soldiers. Kings understood the significance of this military department and avoided any actions that would annoy or disrupt it. When we observe the entire military administrative structure, we can witness a transitional period from the ancient period to the medieval period in Indian history.

#### **Military administration of ancient India**

The two great epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana, influenced Indian warfare practices. During the Vedic period, society was organized into clans, and warfare primarily revolved around inter-clan conflicts over resources such as cattle, green pastures, and river territories. The emergence of Bharatas and Purus as Aryan settlers in northern India marked a significant example of conflicts among clans, with the Aryans prevailing over the original inhabitants like Dasyus and Panis. Gopas or Gopatis served as territorial protectors during this time. The later Vedic era witnessed the rise of strong kingdoms such as Magadh, Kashi, Kosala, Anga, Videha, Kalinga, as well as republics like Samgha or Gana, Urika, Damini, and Yaudheya. The supreme commander of the army, known as the Senani, led the king's army, comprising Aryan nobles and commoners serving as archers, slingers, stone-throwers, cavalrymen, chariot-drivers, and elephant-riders.

Arrows and chakras were considered significant weapons during warfare. The Kshatriyas, belonging to the second class of society, were known for their courage and willingness to sacrifice their lives.

During the Vedic period, the concept of organized military administration was absent. However, with the emergence of the Mauryan Empire, significant changes occurred in India's military organization. The Mauryans introduced systematic measures to centralize the administration of the army. They divided the army into various categories, including admiralty, infantry, cavalry, chariots, and elephantry. Ashoka appointed Dharma Mahattas, who played a role in the army but focused more on spreading the message of dharma. The Mauryan army administration was the first organized military organization in India, considering the army as an integral part of the empire and instrumental in territorial expansion. The pre-Mauryan period lacked a concept of organized and systematic army divisions. The invasions by Persians and Greeks, especially Alexander's invasion, accelerated the need for a formidable force. Horses were considered the fastest and easiest mode of travel, particularly light horse-drawn carriages. In contrast to the Mauryas, the Guptas did not possess a large standing organized army. Feudal lords played a significant role in the Gupta military organization. The Basarh seal provides evidence of the Gupta's military administration, where ministers served as civil and military officers and accompanied the king in battle. The concept of feudalism became more prevalent during the Gupta period, as feudal lords became essential for military strength and contributed to the emergence of regional powers in post-Gupta India.

The rise of the Pushyabhuti dynasty under Harshavardhana necessitated the creation of a strong and efficient army. Harsha followed the Mauryan model and categorized the army into cavalry, infantry, chariots, and elephants. He also introduced the method of self-inspection. The Maula Bala office played a significant role during Harshavardhana's time, recruiting trained and efficient warriors who served as vanguards, palace guards, and a standing army in wars. The late Satavahanas introduced "Gulma" as a new feature of military administration. Gulma was a combined army company consisting of nine chariots, nine elephants, 27 horses, and 45 foot soldiers. They proved to be effective in dealing with revolts in villages and contributed to the military strength of the centralized Satavahana army.

The Cholas had a highly modified and advanced military administration, enabling them to achieve overseas conquests, particularly by Rajaraja I and Rajendra I in the Indian Ocean and the Malay Peninsula. Unlike the Mauryas and Guptas, who focused on divisions within the army, the Cholas divided their army based on the weapons used. They not only emphasized training but also introduced advanced weapons and techniques, such as archers (villigal), foot soldiers (valperra kaikkolar), infantry of the right hand (velaikkaran of the valangai), chosen horsemen (kudiraiccevaragar), and elephant corps (anaiyatkal, kunjira mallar). The Cholas maintained military training and discipline in cantonments called kadagams.

The concept of navy emerged during the Pala dynasty, as the kingdom was surrounded by rivers, necessitating a focus on naval warfare. This addition of a fifth wing further enhanced the military organization. The term "centralized army" was a post-Mauryan concept. The post-Mauryan armies were heterogeneous, recruiting soldiers from various castes, including Brahmins, Vaishyas, Kshatriyas, Shudras, and Mlechas, or mixed castes. These soldiers lacked proper training and equipment but obeyed the king's orders. The Rajput armies, consisting mainly of feudal lords raised by different Rajput leaders, lacked unity of purpose and fought for individual glory.

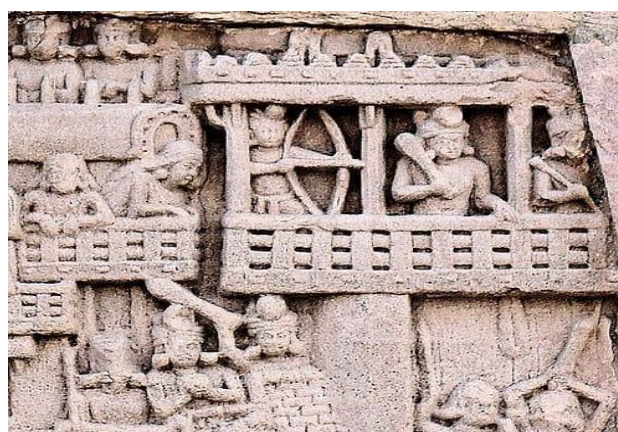
Warfare during the pre-Vedic and post-Vedic periods had a homogeneous character. The focus was primarily on internal security rather than territorial expansion. Wars were class-based, involving tribes and communities. Cattle, tribal principalities, and caste played significant roles as causes of war. The mode of warfare, such as archery, slinging, and rock-throwing, was relatively simple. The Aryans' use of chariots drawn by horses and coats of mail (varman) provided them with an advantage. The term "military organization" does not apply to the Vedic period, as the concept of organized armies was absent.

**Military administration in The Medieval Period**

The Muslim Autocratic rulers heavily depended on their military strength. Being an alien power to the native Indians the entire Medieval period was marked by consistent internal revolts, Mongol invasion, imperialistic expansion and foreign invasions. So to put an end to it was a priority of the muslim rulers to maintain a formidable force. The military organization of the Medieval period was based mainly on the Turkish model, The first such Turkish ruler of India who introduced the concept of military organization of the Sultanate was Iltutmish. He created an army that was centrally recruited, centrally paid and centrally administered. But it was Alauddin Khilji who felt the need of a strong centralized military and for that he made an effort to recruit them Directly. Akbar being a kind towards Hindus took a step forward and entered into matrimonial alliances with different kingdoms especially the Rajputs to strengthen further his empire by Establishing a sound army of all sections of society.

**Characteristics of the army during sultanate period**

The army of the sultans was consisted of infantry, cavalry and elephants. These sultans being the traditional horse riders gave much importance to cavalry. These cavalries were supplied with branded horses that were imported from distant foreign Countries like Arabia, Turkistan etc. For effective result and convenience, army was decided into four divisions namely, the central, the left the right and the reserved. The central army was provided with trained elephants and specific spaces were maintained among foot soldiers. The army was designated with various titles like amirs, khans, maliks to mark their military gradation based on their works. The derivation of soldiers was made from diverse religion and regions such as the Afghans, the Abyssinians , the Persians , the Mongols , the Arabs , the Turks , the Hindus and the Indian Musalmans. (Jackson, 1999) . There could have been different reasons for such recruitments as understood by me,increasing the quantity and quality of soldiers, maintenance of a formidable standing army and reluctance of the ruler to provide a national character to the army. Mostly importantly two methods were adopted for the payment of soldiers based on their ranks and services. In this connection the term iqtadari system should be taken into consideration.



**Figure I.**

The term Iqta came into existence during the reign of Iltutmish. The military officers like nobles, governors and princess were assigned iqtas, which was a hereditary ownership of land. They collected revenue on their terms and in lieu of this supplied an efficient army to the emperor according to his demand. Some of the troops were paid in cash. One to ten thousand tankas were paid to petty military officers based on their strength. Balban being an efficient statesman emphasizes more on quality and quantity of the army for that he adopted a new strategy called defensive security. He created a defensive line across the region of

Lahore, Multan and Dipalpur placed under Prince Muhammad and another across Sunam Samana and Bhatinda placed under his youngest son, Prince Bughra Khan. Thus he emphasized more on the military strength of the army on defensive lines.

### DESIGNATION

Sultans always tried to strength there army on modern lines. The Sultan created a centralized army for the efficient functioning of administration. Those soldiers who were recruited by the center constituted the army called Khasah i Khail. They also divided cavalry into two offices soldiers who kept only one horse were called Sawars and those who kept two horses were called Do aspa. Sar-i-Khail was the officer in-charge of the unit consisted of ten horsemen. Sipahasalar was the commanding officer of ten ‘ten horsemen. Sipahsalar Was the commanding officer of ten Sar-i-khail. An Amir was the commanding officer of over ten units of Siphasalars. A Malik was the officer in-charge of ten amirs and a Khan was an incharge of ten maliks. Sar-i-jandar was the officer in-charge of bodyguards and jandars were the bodyguards of the sultans. The office of the Amir-i-akhur (the master of horses) was held by dignitaries like the Turkish Malik. During the reign of Razia Sultana, she appointed an Abyssinian, Jamal-ud-din Yakut to this post which was responsible for the tussle between Razia and other offices and ultimately brought her downfall. it was Alauddin khilji who for the first time over the seat of Sultanate introduced the most revolutionary and precautionary measures in the form of Dagh and Huliya in the military administration. Dagh indicated branding of horses and huliya signified descriptive rolls of soldiers. He also constructed a new town Siri which was used as garrison town.



Figure. 2

### DIWAN-I-ARZ

This is the office of military affairs of Delhi Sultanate. Arz-i-mamalik was the head of this ministry. He was assigned the task of recruitment in the army, prepared descriptive rolls of soldiers and the horses, inspected the troops at least once in a year, maintained discipline in the army, took care of the equipments for the forces, maintained muster rolls and revised the salaries annually and was in-charge of all preparations during military campaigns. (Chandra, 1997) All the above mentioned sub-sections were placed under the supervision of the Diwan-i-Arz

### Characteristics of mughal army

The Mughal army consisted of sub-sections like Dakhili troops who were directly managed by the state, the Ahadis who were considered as the personal contingent of the emperor, the Barwardi who were armed police to assist during the process of rent collection, the Kumakis were those auxiliaries whose



services were lent at the time of war to mansabdars, gunners and musketeers. A revolutionary step in military administration was adopted by Akbar with the introduction of Mansabdari system. The term Mansab signified rank or place which mean holder of ranks in the administration. Throughout the Mughal period, the lowest rank was 10 and highest rank was 50,000. The ranks were further divided into Zat and Sawar ranks. (Chandra, Medieval India , From Sultanat To The Mughals,Part Two Mughal Empire (1526 - 1748 - 1999). The former got fixed personal status and later indicated the number of cavalrymen supposed to maintain by a person. Mansabdars were holders of ranks below 500 zat, Amirs were holders of more then 500 but below 2500 zats and Amir – i – umda or Amir – i - azam or Omrahs were holders of 2500 zats and above. Again zabti was enforced on those mansabdars whose property was confiscated by the emperors after his death.The Dagh system was introduced by Akbar which meant the maintenance of soldier through a descriptive roll (Chehra) and imperial marks was inscribed on his horses. Jahangir introduced two innovative steps in Mansabdari system Du-aspa which meant troops who possessed two horses and Sih aspa who possessed three horses. Naqdi were those who received pay in cash and jagirdars were those who were paid through assignment of jagirs.

### **MIR BAKSHI**

The whole above mentioned department of army during the period of mughal administration was placed under Mir Bakshi. He was the head of all military establishments. He was responsible for appointment of mansabs, enforced code of conduct for the army, maintained an enrolment register of mansabdars, supervised branding of horses of the mansabdars, acted as pay master and also all salary bills used to pass through his office.

### **CONCLUSION**

In spite of this military nature, we can trace a series of shortcomings during the Medieval period .The Medieval rulers followed the same division of the army into cavalry, infantry, but failed to provide technical training to different wings. They should have emphasized on varied technical training and mode of warfare to different wings. They also failed to equip their soldiers with modern means of warfare. Again recruitment of soldiers from all sects like Afghans, Mughals, Arabs etc opened the path of revolutionary groups among the troops. By depending on feudal lords for the supply of the army was another weakness as they always tried to curb out their own principalities. Taj-ud-din Yaloz, Governor of Kirman the nobles of Turkan-i-chahalgani of Iltutmish's reign, Alauddin Khilji, Governor of Kara of Jalal-ud-din Khilji's reign, Kamran, Hindal and Askari, the three brothers of Humayun revolted against the central administration. The most defective episode that weakened not only the central character of the army but was also responsible for emptied treasure was the iqtadari system. The holders of iqtas were called muqtis. To conclude it we can say that the phenomena of maintaining an army from Ancient period to Medieval period visualized me a drastic change.

The ancient period army was maintained specifically for maintaining internal security, but Medieval army was meant for territorial expansion. The era of two epic war to Vedic civilization visualized simple army organization equipped with simple weapons like bows, arrows, stone throwers etc. Moreover divisions of army into sub-divisions started reflecting during the Mauryan period when the rulers divided the army into various wings. Division of army indicated appointment of efficient soldiers in each wing . Whereas the Medieval phase of indian history always emphasized on maintaining a formidable force for their existence in a foreign land. Right from the coming of Muhammad Ghori up to Aurangzeb, they struggled hard with Indian rulers and also foreign invaders like the Mongols, Timur's etc. So they maintained divisions of the army into cavalry, infantry, foot soldiers and the measures like Dagh Huliya, du aspa si aspa, saperte department of army, trainings of soldiers make the army of medieval india a vibrant one .These things were completely absent during the Ancient India.

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