



JAGIR: System under the Nizams of Hyderabad in India

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ABSTRACT

*A “jagir” also spelled as a “jageer”, was a type of feudal land grant in South Asia at the foundation of its Jagirdar system. It developed during the Islamic rule era of the Indian subcontinent, starting in the early 13th century, wherein the powers to govern and collect tax from an estate was granted to an appointee of the state. The tenants were considered to be in the servitude of the jagirdar. There were two forms of jagir, one being conditional and the other unconditional. The conditional jagir required the governing family to maintain troops and provide their service to the state when asked. The land grant was called *iqta*, usually for a holder's lifetime, and the land reverted to the state upon the death of the jagirdar.*

The jagirdar system was introduced by the Delhi Sultanate, and continued during the Mughal Empire, but with a difference. In the Mughal times, the jagirdar collected taxes which paid his salary and the rest to the Mughal treasury, while the administration and military authority was given to a separate Mughal appointee. After the collapse of Mughal Empire, the system of jagirs was retained by Rajput and Sikh kingdoms, and later in a form by the British.

Keyword: Jagir Nizams, Khalisa, Troop, Surf-I-Khas, Paegah, Dewanee, Sawar.

INTRODUCTION

Lavish, opulent, ostentatious, and extravagant are just some words that come to mind when you think of the Nizams that ruled the erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad for 224 years. A book on Telangana or any reference to its history and culture is incomplete without a mention of the Nizams, for their influence on the state and its history is indisputable. Seven Nizams, who were also known as Asaf Jahis, ruled Hyderabad – the

seventh, Asaf Jah Nawab Mir Osman Ali Khan Bahadur reigned till 1948. From 1724 to 1948, Hyderabad underwent immense growth, both culturally and economically. The Nizams were great patrons of literature, art, architecture, and food; and were counted amongst the wealthiest people in the world. Asaf Jah VII was ranked the fifth wealthiest person in the history of the world, with his fortune pinned at US\$ 225 billion at its height, adjusted to today's value. The Nizam chose not to join the Indian Union after India gained independence in August 1947. However, his rule ended in September 1948, when the Indian Army launched Operation Polo, led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, then Minister of Home Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister of India. The State of Hyderabad was invaded, and the Nizam was forced to step down. The Asaf Jahis were allowed to keep their titles even after their reign ended. Asaf Jah VII chose his grandson Nawab Mir Barakat Ali Khan Bahadur Mukarram Jah as his successor, but he was Nizam only in name. To organize the nobility as well as his army, Akbar introduced the Jagirdari system in 1577. Before Akbar's reign, this was in use in Central Asia implying rank. During Babur's time, the term Jagirdari was not used; instead, another term Wajhdar was employed.

JAGIR SYSTEM:

Jagir or Tuyul were land revenue assignment to a Mansabdar in lieu of his salary. The assignees were known as Jagirdars. The Jagirs assigned instead of salary were known as Tankhah Jagirs. Besides, there were the Watan Jagirs (hereditary possessions) of the autonomous chiefs, who were also granted the former type of Jagirs if in Mughal service. Under Jahangir some Muslim nobles were given Jagirs resembling to Watan Jagir called Al-

Tamgha. The Mashrut Jagirs were given to a person on certain conditions. Jagirs which involved no obligation of service and were independent of rank were called Inam Jagirs. The Jagir lands were different from the Khalisa land, the revenues from the Khalisa lands were earmarked for the maintenance of the imperial court and the personal expenditure of the army. The Jagir of the Mughal period was similar to the Iqta of the Delhi Sultanate (Munim Khan al Hamadani, p.290).

The assignment of a Jagir to a Mansabdar did not confer any hereditary rights to the Jagir. He could enjoy the revenues of the Jagir only as long as he held the Mansab (rank) and rendered services to the state. To assign Jagirs, the revenue department had to maintain a register indicating the assessed income (Jama) in dams, calculated at the rate of 40 dams to a rupee. This register was called "Jama-dami" of an area. The Jama included land revenue, inland transit duties, port customs, and other taxes which were known as "Sair Jihat." The term Hasil meant the amount of revenue collected. The term Paibaqi was applied to those areas whose revenue were yet to be assigned to Mansabdars. The Mughal emperor followed the policy of many transfer of Jagirs of the Jagirdars to negate any development of national loyalty that would undermine the empire by strengthening the Jagirdar. Thus, the Jagir system was closely related to the Mansab system. All the Jagirdars were Mansabdars, but not all Mansabdars were Jagirdars because some were paid in cash. In former times a more significant portion of the troops of the Nizams army never received their pay in cash directly from the treasury they were raised, paid, mustered, equipped, and accounted for the military chiefs. Again, these chiefs seldom received sums in cash to be disbursed for the pay and other charges of their men, but generally obtained assignments (Tunkhwah) on the revenues through the fiscal authorities, or else they obtained the full power to manage the districts altogether and administer the revenues. Moreover, this entrusting of the entire administration of districts to military chiefs became at one period very frequent. If the chief was a person of superior stamp himself and able to control his retainers, then the arrangement merely partook of the regular character of a feudal system, and if not free from defect, possessed all the advantages of that system. However, if the chief was an unprincipled or rapacious man himself, and incompetent to control his myrmidons, then abuses to which this arrangement opened the door became very serious. Again with those troops for whose charges cash was disbursed from the treasury, the

pay was not made over to the men individually. The aggregate sum would be disbursed to the chief, or to the commander, and he settled with the men in his way. This arrangement seems to have few of the advantages of feudality, whereas the abuses to which it was liable were endless- it was destructive of soldiers existing only on paper was fostered. And with troops that had some effective existence, the pay and allowances of the men were not even nominally under the control of the government they served but rested solely with the chiefs. Of course, it was often more than doubtful whether the soldier got anything like what he was entitled to, or what his government were charged with (Munim Khan al Hamdani, p.291).

Further, there was never any commander-in-chief or any central military authority, to insist on the troops being really maintained, or even on their being fairly mustered. The musters of sections of the troops were held separately and independently, and it was not infrequent for the same soldier to appear at several and different musters perhaps if such central authority had been very efficient. However, even such slight check as it might have supplied was altogether wanting. Under the system, it always was difficult for the Nizams government to ascertain precisely the extent of its military charges. Certain actual disbursements, no doubt, could be specified, for the rest, all that could be said was, that districts estimated to yield such and such revenues had been assigned, it was accompanied with reservations as to its accuracy. The highest estimate ever formed of the Nizam's military expenditure has been about one hundred lakhs, or one million sterling, exclusive of the charges for the Nizams or Hyderabad contingent but this was supposed to be beyond the real mark (Raddiud-din al Musawi, p. 101).

However, further, the system did not admit of any muster-roll, or any return (worthy of the name), of the troops being prepared. Here, again, the highest statement ever given of the Nizam's army (exclusive of the contingent) was something under 50000 men, but this could not be termed even approximately reliable. An attempt may now, however, be made to describe the Nizam's army as it exists at this day. The Nizam's troops under the orders of Dewan may be thus stated (Raddiud-din al Musawi, p.102).

This gives a total of thirty- one thousand men and upwards at the cost of nearly seventy –one lakhs a year. One item, however, that of the Mansabdars, is more of a political character than of a military, though it appears to have been counted as the latter. If that were to be deducted, then the

total would come down to twenty- nine thousand men at fifty-six lakhs. These troops are partly stationed in or about the capital, Hyderabad, but a proportion of them is on detached duty in the districts of the interior, and are, while so employed, termed, Tyenatee (Shoshtari, p. 14).

The cavalry consists of something under 5000 riders. These are in separate bodies. Each body being under its own Jamadar the horsemen is the relation or dependant or otherwise the servant of his Jamdar, and the pay disbursed to the Jamdar, who settles with the men, and who provides the horses, the arms and the accouterments in some cases, and to some extent, there may be supervision on the part of the Government, but the principal reliance is upon the Jamadars there is, in other words, a thoroughly feudal relation between the Jamdar and the Sawar or trooper and the force generally possesses all the advantages or disadvantages of feudality. Some of the Chiefs and the men form excellent Irregular Cavalry; the riders being high-spirited and of good descent and the horses being of the best Deccanee breed it is among these, in fact, that the chivalry of the Deccan is to be found. The Jamdar are all persons of position and respectability some of them are first-rate men both as to character and family, and indeed, are among the very flower of the population. Some, again are of an inferior description. With very few exceptions, the force consists entirely of Mahomedans. The following are some of the principal Jemadars. Who are Native Gentlemen of mark and consideration?

- RAFEEK-YAROO-DOWLA, son of a well-known chief, Ameer Nawaz Jang, having two hundred horse.
- ALIM ALI KHAN, son of a well-known chief, Dilawar Navaz Jang, having four hundred horse.
- MOOMTAZ NAWAZ JUNG or Bheekoo Meean, a well-known chief having one hundred and fifty horse .

There are many other Jemadars commanding small parties, whom it would be tedious to particularize .there are also some horse in fair order, about sixty and upwards, called after the name of the late Rajeshwar. Rao Serishtedar of a part of cavalry of these his two sons is the Jemadars. There is a body also of horse, numbering two hundred and seventy- five, once in the service of the late Rajah of Wunpurty and after his death, taken into the Government service it is called the Wunpurty lancers, and is under the supervision of the European Commandant of the „Reformed Troops, but has not any European

officer of its own. It is now stationed at Mukttul in the Kurnool direction. There is also a troop of Abyssinian horse organized and set up in very superior style. The best part of the artillery consists of two batteries, under European officer's .and form part of the Reformed Troops. Bullocks draw the guns. These batteries are in excellent order and condition. There are, of course, many other guns scattered over the country. Those of very light and small Caliber being attached to the detachments in the interior of the country, and those of larger Calibre being in the various forts such as Golconda, Yaktal, Dowlutabad, Gulbarga, Raichur, Nuldroog, Bowungeer. Much of the ordinance in these forts is doubtless not serviceable. The gunners are probably not well trained. The number of these men in the forts is stated. Of the infantry, the most important section is that of the Arabs. These are now returned at five thousand nine hundred and eighty- six men. Which amount is much below former returns and shows a very considerable reduction. Of these, the real strength and nucleus consists of real Arab (usual), either born in Arabia or of Arabian parents on both sides: the remainder being “Mowullud’ THAT IS, SONS OF Arabs fathers and Indian mothers. Of the whole about two –thirds may be “Usual” and the rest. “Mowullud”. the “usual” Arab have many material and soldierly qualities :they possess courage and endurance their aptitude for holding together with mutual aid and support in moments of danger or trial is remarkable : though undisciplined and untrained, they are skillful in some kinds of fighting, palerticularly when any partial shelter from walls or the like is afforded; in many respects, but not in all, their character as military men who know they highly estimate troops. Behind any cover they are formidable, but in the open plain, they would not face disciplined troops. Their arms consist of matchlocks with a considerable range, and of formidable daggers, called Jumbeers. Their violence and lawlessness were once notorious, though of late they have been much better behaving. Even now, their bearing and demean or, though much improved is far below the proper standard .the Mowulluds have same the kind of character as the “Usuls” though, of course, mitigated and toned down. The men stand in a feudal relation towards their chiefs or ‘Jemadars” the Jamadar receives the payment for the men and settles with them: he also provides the arms there is no prescribed uniform. The pay allowed to the Jamadar for each man is and has always been fourteen rupees monthly. The only class of officer under the Jemadar and over the Arab soldiers is



called the “Choos’ a name of Turkish, not of Arab, origin (Raddiud-din al Musawi, p.108).

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