The emergence, evolution and consolidation of mansabdari represents one of the most interesting chapters in the history of Mughal rule in India. Significant work on this question has been done by many scholars. This includes the contributions of S.Nurul Hasan, Irfan Habib, P.Saran, Athar Ali, Abdul Aziz, William Irvine, A.R.Khan and Shireen Moosvi apart from some others. But jagirdars and jagirdari still remain an inadequately researched subject, even though the importance of its study has for long been realized by scholars. Satish Chandra, for example, has considered the jagirdari crisis as the basic cause of the downfall of the Mughal empire. Bernier's famous statement that the transfer of jagirs lead to the ever-increasing oppression of the peasantry, has found support amongst scholars and certainly needs to be more closely examined. While the question of peasant exploitation continues to remain an illusive issue, that of transfer of jagirs has been relatively easier to investigate.

Since my college days, I have been confounded and confused by the question of jagirdari. Very often the features of jagirdari seemed to be contradictory and vague. I came to examine the matter, more seriously
during my Post-graduate studies and realized that not very extensive work had been done on the subject except for some articles. Amongst these were Irfan Habib's chapter, 'Revenue Assignments' in his work, The Agrarian System of Mughal India; W.H.Moreland's chapter 'The Assignments' in, Agrarian System of Moslem India; Athar Ali's chapter 'The Jagirdari system and the Nobility' in The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb), Satish Chandra's introduction to Parties and Politics at Mughal Court; N.A.Siddiqi's chapter 'Division of land Revenue' in Land Revenue Administration under the Mughal, 1707-1750 and S.M.Raza Naqvi's 'procedure of Jagir Assignment from Akbar to Aurangzeb', in Proceeding of The Indian History Congress, 36 (1975). Even these works take up a much longer period of the Mughal empire from (1556 to 1707). We have only two article's about Jagirdari which especially deal with Akbar's reign. These are Iqtidar Alam Khan 'The Mughal Assignment System During Akbar Early year 1556-1575' in Irfan Habib (ed.) Medieval India New Delhi, 1992 and Mahendar Pal 'Akbar's Resumption of Jagir' 1575-9' re-examination Proceeding of the Indian History Congress, 26 (1964). Even these tend to leave out some important aspects of the Jagirdari system as it existed during the reign of Akbar.

While starting this work I was not fully aware of the difficulty of the task and the vastness of the subject. This was further compounded by the limitations
and the non-availability of primary source material. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to gather as much scattered material as possible and to present an intelligible argument. An endeavor has been made to present the features as well as the working of jagirdari system during the reign of Akbar.

The topic, as its title shows, does not pretend to cover the entire Mughal period, but concerns itself only with the jagirdars of Akbar's reign.

In order to clarify and substantiate the various aspects it has been considered, appropriate to add a few tables, maps and appendices. These are by no means perfect, but may prove useful in improving our understanding.

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(BAL KRISHAN)