ABSTRACT

Rajput Nobility Under Jahangir and Shahjahan

The nobility of Babur basically comprised of people of Central Asian origin popularly called Turanis with the exception of few Khurasanis who joined him after the collapse of the Timuride Kingdom of Hirat. The studies of the nobility of early Mughal period (of Babaur and Humayun’s reign) have shown that due to the predominance of the Turanis in the nobility it became difficult for them to establish a strong centralized monarchy. After his reconquest of Qandhar and Kabul Humayun brought about significant changes not only in the composition of his nobility but also in his attitude toward them. We also find that the attitude of his nobles also underwent a great change, but before the effect of these changes could take a shape Humayun died, leaving young Akbar to deal with these and several other problems with which the Empire was faced. Hence, the nobility that Akbar inherited too comprised mainly of Turanis. Some Iranis have joined Humayun’s service in Iran but with the exception of few such as Bairam Khan and Mirza Nijat they held minor positions in the imperial government. Turani nobles held almost all the important offices and military commands. During the period of the regency of Bairam Khan and even after his dismissal the Turani nobility defied imperial authority and in a way opposed every attempt of the emperor to establish his hold over the apparatus of the imperial government. However, he was not ready to tolerate any longer the irresponsible and disloyal attitude of his nobles. Therefore, to tighten his grip on them he introduced several administrative reforms and also appointed men of his own choice on crucial administrative positions. The Turani nobles considered these changes as an assault on their prerogatives that they considered were granted to them by an age-old tradition preserved in Tura-i Chengezi. They believed that if some strong steps were not
taken at this stage the nobles (Turani nobles) would lose their privileged position and in the long run Tura-i- Chengezi will also seize to exist. Therefore, they violently reacted by unfurling the banner of revolts against Mughal imperial authority.

Some modern historians are of the view that Rajputs and Shaikzadas (Indian Muslims) were admitted in the nobility by Akbar to counter the Turani nobility, as at that time he was not strong enough to take action against them. But in an alleged conversation between Shah Tahmasp of Persia and Humayun when the latter was in exile in Persia, the Shah advised Humayun to establish kinship ties with Rajputs and a reference in Akbarnama where in Abul Fazal writes that on his return to India, Humayun, “in order to soothe the mind of the Zamindars, entered into matrimonial relations with them”, clearly indicate that in the aristocratic circles a thinking had developed that for the expansion and consolidation of the Mughal Empire in India the local chiefs (Zamindars) should not only be admitted in imperial service but be given important position among the ruling elites. The author of Maasir-i Rahimi writes that Bairam Khan after becoming wakil-us sultanat of Akbar took keen interest in establishing friendly relations with the Rajputs. Whether it was at the initiative of Bairam Khan or because of his own family problems Raja Bhar Mal, the Kachhwaha chief of the state of Amber visited the court of Akbar in his second regnal year and by his bold actions so greatly impressed the young emperor that he is said to have remarked. “We’ll rear you.” However, no great progress was made in respect of admitting Rajputs or any other local elements during the period of the regency of Bairam Khan. But after the dismissal of Bairam Khan when Akbar took the reins of government in his hands he decided to admit Rajputs and Shaikhzadas (Indian Muslims) in his ruling class. The Emperor also entered into matrimonial relations with both the Rajputs and Indian Muslims. The Kachhwahas of Ambers were the first to join Mughal service but thereafter almost all other prominent Rajput
chiefs with the exception of Sisodias of Mewar also joined imperial service. The Emperor accorded them the status of loyal subordinates and friends. They were not only given command of the important military campaigns but were also appointed on important administrative duties. They have very significant presence in the nobility both numerically as well as in total mansabs, awarded during Akbar's reign. The Rajputs also held charge of a number of provinces during his rule. Akbar extended matrimonial relations with the Rajputs by tying royal Princes more closely with them. Thus the eldest son Salim was married in 1584 to the daughter of Bhagwant Das. Shortly afterwards Salim was also married to the daughter of Mota Raja Udai Singh. A little later Daniyal was married to the daughter of Rao Raimal son of Rao Maldeo. Broadly the same policy was followed by his successors with some little changes here and there.

Although the study of Mughal nobility had attracted a good deal of attention of scholars and some excellent studies analysing in detail the role of the nobility in the reign of Aurangzeb and later Mughals have long been published but baring few monographs and research papers on the lives of important Rajput nobles and houses, no comprehensive study on the Rajput chieftancies and nobility, particularly their role and position at Mughal court so far had been made for the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan. The present study is a humble attempt in this direction. The thesis is devided into seven chapters including introduction and conclusion.

In the first chapter we have discussed the role of Kachhwahas of Amber during the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan including the events of the war of succession among the sons of Shahjahan. We have started our discussion with the admission of Kachhwahas in the Mughal nobility during Akbar's early years. As this was the beginning of the admission of Rajputs in the imperial service we have pointed out the features of this alliance and the unique position that the
Kachhwahas enjoyed in Akbar’s reign. Thereafter, we have discussed the career of Kachhwah nobles during the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan and have specifically discussed the circumstances which led to slight decline in their fortunes in the time of Jahangir. We have explained that the decline suffered by them was mainly because of Man Singh’s role during the accession crisis at the time of Akbar’s death and the revolt of Khusrau. We have also shown that Jahangir was hostile only towards Man Singh and his relations with other Kachhwahas nobles remained quite friendly. During the revolt of Khurram and Mahabat Khan coup the Kachhwaha nobles remained loyal to Jahangir. The position of Kachhwahas considerably improved during the reign of Shahjahan. He had complete confidence in them and Mirza Raja Jai Singh was raised to the rank of 7000/7000 and appointed governor of the subas of Akbarabad in 1631 (temporary) and Deccan in 1645. We have also discussed the role of Jai Singh during the war of succession among the sons of Shahjahan. The career of other prominent Kachhwaha nobles of the reigns of Jahangir and Shajahan have also been discussed with particular reference to the ranks and offices given to them.

The second chapter is devoted to the study of the Rathors of Marwar. The Rathors also joined Mughal service quite early during Akbar’s reign but due to rebellion of Chandra Sen they could not attain very high position during his reign. However during the reign of Jahangir they were able to considerably improve their position because Jahangir was unhappy with the Kachhwahs and wanted to give importance to other houses of Rajputana. Besides that Jahangir also had matrimonial relations with Marwar and like Akbar (who gave prominent position to Kachhwahs) he too wanted to give more importance to the relations of his Rathor wife. Consequently the number of Rathors in the nobility increased. Some of them were also given high ranks and deputed to serve in important military campaigns. But they were able to really achieve high status during Shahjahan’s reign. One of the important reasons for this seems to have been
Shahjahan’s personal relationship with the family. Shahjahan’s mother Manmati was a princess of Marwar. Raja Jaswant Singh was rapidly promoted to the rank of 7000/7000 as a mark of very special favour. Later on he was also appointed governor of two provinces (in 1645 Agra and in 1657 Malwa). The table of Rathor nobles of the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan given in the chapter clearly indicate that numerical strength as well as total ranks of Rathore nobles considerably increased during this period. We have also discussed the role of Jaswant Singh and other Rathore nobles in the war of succession.

In the third chapter the role of Hadas of Bundi had been examined. In this chapter also we have started our discussion with their admission in imperial service in the time of Akbar. But during his reign the Hadas were able to get neither higher ranks nor important administrative duties due to the revolts of Rao Duda. The family however, got important position in the time of Jahangir and Rao Ratan Hada (Sarbuland Rai) was given independent charge of Mughal Deccan. During the reign of Shahjahan also Hadas remained quite important in the Mughal nobility; however after the death of Rao Ratan Hada to avoid war of succession the chieftaincy was divided into two independent states of Bundi and Kota under the subordination of the Mughals. Although the Haras remained quite influential at the Mughal court and were deputed to service in almost all the important military campaigns but their presence in the nobility was never very large. In the closing section of the chapter we have discussed their role in the war of succession among the sons of Shahjahan.

Fourth chapter of the thesis is devoted to the study of Rathors of Bikaner. Akbar was very kind to its chief Rai Rai Singh; he received very high rank, which was next only to the Kachhwahas of Amber. However, Rai Rai Singh rebelled during the early years of Jahangir’s reign and due that for a brief period he was out of favour. But on his persistent pleadings he was pardoned and
confirmed to his previous position. In 1612 after the death of Rai Rai Singh Dalip was made the ruler of Bikaner. But he rebelled in the following year. An army was send against him; he was defeated and awarded capital punishment. The action taken against Dalip was very harsh but Rao Sur Singh the newly appointed chief remained a favourite of Jahangir and thereafter his son and successor Rao Karan also maintained his position in the reign of Shahjahan. We have discussed their role in the war of succession also. The table of Rathor nobles of Bikaner (of the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan) given in appendix will show that their numerical strength was never very large.

In the fifth chapter we have discussed the career of the chiefs of Mewar. In this chapter also we have started our discussion from the time of Akbar, briefly narrating the events of Mughal - Mewar relations, specially pointing out that although Rana Pratap and his son Rana Amar Singh continued to defy Mughal imperial authority but certain members of his family and few Sisodia Samants joined imperial service. During the reign of Jahangir in his sixth regnal year Rana Amar Singh offered to accept the subordination of the Mughals provided he was excused from personal presence. Jahangir immediately accepted these terms and peace was established although Rana Pratap had also offered to submit on the same terms but Akbar in his arrogance had rejected his request and an unnecessary war continued for a long time. After the settlement Jahangir established very cordial relation with Mewar. Kunwar Karan was raised to the rank of 5000 and other members of the family were also given ranks and other marks of favour. However, Sisidias were the only Rajputs who openly supported Khurram in his rebellion against his father Jahangir. Rana Karan also came out openly to support the candidature of Khurram after Jahangir’s death. After the accession of Shahjahan the Sisodias considerably improved their position at the Mughal court because of two reasons. Firstly, Rana Karan had personal relations with Khurram from the days of his princehood; as a matter of fact the settlement
between Mewar and the Mughals was reached with his efforts and secondly the Rana had openly supported him during his revolt and even allowed his brother Kunwar Bhim to join his army in his campaigns. The relations of Shahjahan with Mewar however got strained when he came to know that the Rana was repairing the fort of Chittor in utter disregard of the settlement of 1615. Therefore, an army under the command of Saadullah Khan was sent to Chittor and while still the negotiations were in progresses the newly constructed and repaired structures of the fort were completely destroyed. The Rana accepted the humiliating terms of the treaty and continued to serve but he became extremely unhappy with Shahjahan. He also established close contact with Aurangzeb and from the very beginning of the war of succession he openly sided with Aurangzeb. We have also briefly discussed the career of other members of the family of the Rana and also other Sisodia nobles who were in imperial service. Table of Sisodia nobles of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan’s reign have also been provided.

In the above chapters we have provide information about the policy of the Mughal Emperors towards five prominent houses of Rajputana representing the clans of Kachhwahas, Rathors(of Marwar and Bikaner), Hadasa and Sisodias. We have given details of the admission of the chiefs and their sons and other relations in Mughal service during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan along with their mansabs and appointments. In each chapter the career and achievements of such other Rajput nobles who were not related to the family of chieftains but were admitted in service had also been discussed. The mansabs and appointments given to them have also been recorded in our discussion. On the basis of the information collected in the above chapters we have prepared lists of Rajput noble along with their mansabs and appointments of the reign of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan. A clan wise list of all the Rajput nobles of the same period have also been prepared and appended in the present study.
On the basis of the information given in the chapters and statistical information provided in the appendices one may conclude that after the admission of Rajputs in the imperial service under Akbar, who greatly favoured them by assigning high ranks and important offices; it became the basic policy of the Mughal rulers to follow friendly relation with them and to keep them in good humour high ranks and important offices should also be assigned to them. Our information further confirms that from Akbar’s time to the closing years of Shahjahan’s reign, Rajputs continued to have very substantial presence in the nobility. The suggestion made by some modern historians on the basis of few contemporary accounts that Jahangir was hostile towards Rajputs is not wholly true. Jahangir no doubt was hostile to Man Singh because of his active participation in the conspiracy to supersede him with Khusrau, but with other members of the Kachhwaha clan he maintained cordial relations. Besides that he established friendly relations with the Rana of Mewar on the same terms and conditions, which were earlier rejected by Akbar. The numeral strength of the Rajput nobles throughout this period was below only to Irani and Turani nobles with whom the Mughal emperors had very personal relationship. All other local elements in the nobility including Indian Muslims were far below to their strength. Both Jahangir and Shahjahan like Akbar also had very good relations with Rajput nobles in general but they have their own favourite Rajput nobles and clans who were now given more prominence at court.