CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A conceptual analysis of the phenomenon of nobility leads us to affirm that the institution of nobility signified a powerful and influential class in the socio-political structure of the medieval times. It had a status which was legal, which in turn was hereditary in character. The nobility comprised a few selected families. The medieval state provided recognition to its hereditary succession, and its numerous powers and privileges. In the first feudal age in Europe, the nobility comprised the powerful noble elements who had acquired an influential position in the contemporary society due to the ineffectiveness of the government. During the later feudal age in Europe, the nobility's character underwent changes. Now it was associated with a legal monopoly. Thus the de-facto nobility changed to a de-jure one. The noble was not a vassal now. There were differences between the two categories of nobles now.

2. Ibid., P. 332
The Indian nobility of the medieval period was different from its European counterpart. The nobility in Europe was not created deliberately, but it was formed due to the exigencies of the times, chiefly due to the weakness of the kingship and the state. But in India, the nobility was deliberately created by the medieval Indian state. It was deliberately created so as to be used as a prop or support in the task of nation and empire-building, and consolidation of kingship, as it was, in medieval India. The chief factor behind this was the alien and foreign character of the medieval Indian state. The Delhi Sultans and the Mughal emperors were of Central Asian origin, and hence they were foreigners in India.

Both Europe and India underwent periods of feudalism, covering quite the identical ages i.e. middle ages. Indian feudalism had both common and uncommon features as compared to the western feudalism. The main contradiction between the two was that the Indian feudalism was based upon the village community system. But later on, state intervention in village economy cracked the independent structure of the Indian village republics. Moreover, the manorial system and serfdom, two institutions prevailing in western feudalism, were lacking in the Indian feudal system.
The nobility during early medieval India, under the Delhi Sultans, was below the Sultans, because the nobility's power and position were delegated by the state. The claims of the nobility during this period were hereditary. The nobles were originally slaves, and the Sultans did not tolerate their disobedience. The ethnic and racial composition of the nobility of this period comprised the Turks, Afghans, converted Mongols and so on. They played a significant role in the consolidation of the Delhi Sultunate. Under the Khaljis, Indian nobles joined the ranks of the nobility. The nobles did not have a private life of their own, but the Sultans sided with them on normal occasions. During the later Sultans, the nobility became recalcitrant. Meritorious titles were provided to the nobles, e.g. Khans, Maliks, Amirs, etc. Military titles like Sipah-Salar, and Sarkhel, were also there. Official titles, such as Shughl, Khitab, and Aqtas, were also conferred upon them. Revenue assignments provided to the nobles were called Aqtas. Thus the economic status governed the political and social status of the nobles. The aqtas were official grants but later one due to the Sultunate's decline they assumed a hereditary character. The standard of life of the nobility was extremely high as they aped the life-style of the Sultans. They maintained huge establishments. They were very much involved in the court.
activities. The nobles occupied crucial and important positions at different levels of the court. They also indulged in charity and they established quite a few such institutions of charity. This was done all through the life-span of the Delhi Sultanate.

The nobility of the later medieval period or during the Mughal rule was akin to the Sultanate nobility in many respects so far as its organisation and composition are concerned. The nobility was created by the Mughal emperors. Babur composed the nobility from various racial and ethnic elements, such as Timurids, Turanis, Mirzas, Mongols, Iranians, Uzbecks, Afghans etc. The Mughal emperors conferred, increased, decreased, and resumed the Mansab or ranks of the nobles. The nobility was composed of the jagirdars, khanazads, zamindars, etc. During Akbar, Rajputs came to the fore of the Mughal nobility. As the Mughal empire advanced into the Deccan, Deccani noble elements such as Bijapuris, Haiderabadis, and the famous Marathas, entered the Mughal nobility, especially during the later part of the Mughal empire's history. The Mughal nobility was organised on the jagirdari and Mansabdari scales. By the distribution of jagirs the collection of land revenue was assigned to the jagirdars. Mansab meant office, rank, and position. The Mansabdars owed subordination to the
emperors. This organisation was dual in character. First, it was the Zat or personal rank and secondly, it was the Suwar or cavalry rank. The Zat rank came into being during Akbar's reign and consisted of three grades. There were equal Zat and Suwar ranks. There were Suwar ranks just half the Zat ranks. There were even lower than the half Suwar ranks.

Another feature was added to the mansabdari during Jahangir's reign. This was the introduction of what was called the Du-Aspa and Sih-Aspa ranks. These additions were a part of the Suwar ranks. The Mughal nobles received their salaries from the state, in form of cash and jagirs. The salaries were determined by their ranks. Month-scale salaries were introduced during Shahjahan.

The Hindu noble element of the Rajputs were first of all enlisted as Mughal nobles by Akbar, for the exigencies of politics called for such an action. Following the submission of the Kachwaha house of the Rajputana in 1562, Bahar Mall became the first Rajput noble to join the Mughal ranks. Bihari Mal gave his daughter for marriage to Akbar. From Akbar to Aurangzeb, the Rajput nobles played a leading role in the Mughal administration. They served as the most domineering Hindu noble element at the Mughal court during this long period.

3. Abdul Aziz, The Mansabdari System and the Mughal Army, Delhi, 1972, P. 47
4. Ibid, PP. 47-48
Akbar first of all recognised the value of the Rajputs who were vitally important from political considerations as was evidenced from the treaty of Bundi. During the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the noble houses of the Rajputana, chiefly, Jodhpur and Amber, executed dominating roles at the Mughal imperial court. The long contact of the Rajputs with the Mughals saw them serving in remote regions like Maharashtra and Assam. The Rajputs also came to know of the complex administrative and military systems of the Mughals. They also overcame their regional patriotism for the cause of a national sentiment. But on the contrary, the narrow-minded Rajputs became more so isolated with the result that the two conflicting ideas put hindrance to political stability in the Rajputana. Thus Rajasthan came to bear a picture of a zoological garden with the barriers of cages put down and the game keepers absent. Although the Mughals dominated the Rajputs by their offensive ceremonials but they also gave them opportunity to go for unlimited military and political exploits outside the confines of the Rajputana. Thus the noteworthy multi-sided achievements of Man Singh, Jaswant Singh, and Jai Singh. From Akbar to Aurangzeb, the Mughals utilised the Rajput nobles for

6. J.N. Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol.I, Calcutta, 1949, p.131
important imperial purposes and that also without encroaching upon the Rajput authority unduly. However, the disastrous policies of Aurangzeb marred the Mughal Rajput relations.

The other formidable Hindu noble element of the Marathas was included into the Mughal nobility during the later part of the empire's history. The Maratha nobles did not possess an impressive personality like the Rajputs but they were sufficiently proud of their humble origins even after the attainment of power and prestige. The Hindu influence, chiefly due to the Marathas, had come to pervade the Deccani Sultunates even prior to the policy of Suh-i-kul, adopted by Akbar. As the Mughal empire expanded towards the Deccan during the seventeenth century, so the Maratha noble elements intruded into the fore of the Mughal nobility. The Marathas were to be given positions of their choice, without ever disturbing the inner cohesion of the Mughal nobility. It was this process which gave rise to a movement in Maharashtra for regional independence. Malik Ambar, the prominent Mughal general had initially utilised the Maratha chiefs on a large basis. The Mughals now realized the Maratha significance in the conquest of the Deccan. In this way, the Maratha chiefs were provided with military training and political experience.

7. Satish Chandra, Parties and politics at the Mughal court, Delhi, 1972, "Introduction". P.XXXIV.
The class-structure of the Maratha nobles was akin to that of the medieval Indian Muslim nobility. The Maratha nobility also survived basically on the surplus labour extracted out of the peasantry. Greed and self-aggrandizement were the characteristics of this class. Thus encouraged by political exigencies, Aurangzeb started to enlist the Marathas in the Mughal nobility. He even tried to lure Shivaji with a Mansab grant of 5000/5000. By a royal decree he was made a panj-hazari.

The Mughal nobility was integrally bound with the administration, for the entire Mughal bureaucracy comprised the Mughal nobility and rested whole-scale on it. The nobility comprised the court and it executed crucially important court activities. The nobility was divided into tainat-i-rakab and tainat-i-subajat. These were nobles posted at the imperial court and in the provinces of the empire. The nobles were required to obey to the court injunctions and etiquette. The emperors granted different grades of titles and distinctions to the nobility. The most important of these was the 'Khan'. The nobles were involved in public, military, civil, executive and judicial services. In the provincial units there were three vitally crucial executive posts of the Nazim or governor, the faujdar, and the thanedar. Some other important administrative posts were those of the Diwan.

Mir Bakshi, second Bakshi, third Bakshi, and the like. The post of the central Diwan was very important. Thus through the administration of these powerful posts which were transferable, the Mughal nobles got the opportunity of serving through the entire length and breadth of the empire. Through constant transfers the inner balance of the nobility was maintained. The Mughal nobility thus combined the two-fold status of aristocracy and bureaucracy. The emperors scrutinised and acted accordingly, so far as the conduct of the nobility was concerned. The nobles often indulged in unscrupulous activities such as taking bribes, etc. All this contributed to the ultimate weakening of the administrative machinery leading to the downfall of the Mughal empire.

The economic organisation of the Mughal nobility was very strong. The nobles participated extravagantly in the trading and commercial activities of the Mughal empire. They never saved anything as their property was liable to be confiscated by the state after their death. Thus they led a very luxurious life and often landed themselves in heavy debt. They maintained large and expensive household establishments. They extended costly gifts to the emperors on all occasions for personal gratification in the political, social, and economic fields. They aped the luxurious life-style of the emperors themselves. The Mughal nobility was not a landed class like

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the European nobility. The jagirs or revenue assignments were transferable. Neither was the Mughal nobility a mercantile community like the contemporary British nobility Mir Jumla was perhaps a stark exception of a merchant becoming a political figure. The nobles were very much interested in luxury items like jewellery. So they established individual workshops or karkhanas, in which they employed several artisans, who produced luxury items for the daily use and comfort of the nobles. The nobles used to gratify themselves with accepted gifts so as to maintain the high standard of their life. As jagirdars, they had to depend on the land-revenue to meet their expenses. They pressurised the peasantry. Thus their conduct was not above ethical and moral codes.

The Mughal nobility was as an institution, integrally connected with the Mughal social set-up in many-sided ways. Public life and charity were integral features of their social life. The nobles built inns, mosques, gardens, and other institutions of public utility. They were very much interested in arts and letters. They patronised scholars and some of them were themselves respectable scholars. They maintained well-established harems for their women-folk and children. The exchange of gifts was a common practice among them. They were both loyal and disloyal to their rulers. Their

life could be easily described as eminent and in contrast to the life of the general masses.

The Mughal nobility was different than the European nobility in the sense that after death, the property of the noble was confiscated and escheated by the emperor. Thus the Mughal peerage was not hereditary. Art, and morals, and manners were generated by the nobility and passed over to the lower classes. A medieval European authority speaks as such.

The Mughal noble's "position is unstable as the wind, resting on no firm foundation, but rather on pillars of glass, resplendent in the eyes of the world, but collapsing under the stress of even a slight storm.

Their mahals are adorned internally with lascivious sensuality, wanton and reckless festivity, superfluous pomp, inflated pride, and ornamental daintiness, while the servants of the lord may justly be described as a generation of antiquity, greed, and oppression 11.

After the summary of our major findings, we now proceed on to conclude that before Akbar, the Mughal nobility

was not an organised body as it came to be later on. Humayun classified the court into three sections and re-classified them into twelve grades, thus determining the order of precedence. Thereafter, Akbar organised the mansabdari system with 10 being the lowest rank and 5000 being the highest. Later on it was raised to 7000 and even 8000. Definite salary for each mansab and for the number of suwars was fixed. Thus the Mughal nobles became servants of the state. The emoluments enjoyed by them were extremely high and could not be compared to their modern counterparts in civil service. Though the Mughal nobility was not hereditary but it was to an extent self-perpetuating. Ethnic, national, and clan factors did not have favour with the Mughal emperors and as such the Mughal nobility was composed of a colourful heterogeneous multi-racial elements, consisting of Hindustanis and foreigners of chiefly Central Asian extraction. Through the mansabdari system this heterogeneous and multi-racial character of the Mughal nobility was to be simplified and organised. Thus subsequently mixed contingents were into exercise which put restraints on the regional and exclusive interests. The Mughal emperors patronised learning, administrative talent and arts. This encouraged many men to arrive at the Mughal court. Some of these people became very prominent in the Mughal empire. The Mughal emperors believed in the principle of aristocracy and preferred nobles of high birth.
The Rajputs formed a tribal-clan group which was regional in character. But as the champions of the Hindu cause and society, they gained recognition first by Akbar. They were entrusted with guarding the royal harem during the Mughal times. The number of the Rajputs was never very high in the Mughal nobility but some of them like Man Singh, Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh rose to highest situations in the empire. With the progression of the Mughal empire towards the Deccan, the Marathas joined the imperial service. The position of aspiring Marathas in the Mughal imperial service without disturbing the inner cohesion of the Mughal nobility, gave rise to a regional movement in Maharashtra aimed at independence.

To quote an important source,

"The nobility of the Mughals although it suffered from a number of internal weakness, was on a broad view, a remarkable institution which welded into a homogenous and harmonious whole men belonging to different regions and tribes, speaking different languages and professing different religions, and with differing cultural traditions. The Mughals succeeded in imbuing the nobles with a sense of common purpose and loyalty to the reigning dynasty, and in imparting to them a
distinctive cultural outlook, and in creating traditions of high efficiency and endeavour in administration. It was, thus, a definite factor in serving for a century and a half a remarkable degree of unity and good government in the country.\textsuperscript{12}

The Mughal empire held strong for nearly two centuries. At one hand was the gorgeous splendour of the Mughal court and empire and at the other hand was the situation of abject poverty of the masses. The personality of the Mughal emperors was responsible for the strength of the empire and the Mughal nobles played no mean part in bringing this about. The central bureaucracy was of course controlled by the emperors but it spread its veing like blood-vessels all through the empire.

A modern scholar speaks as such of the Mughal nobles,

"They acted as, as it were, the emperor's eyes and ears, the oil which caused the bureaucratic wheels to revolve. The emperor controlled them in a number of ways. Akbar paid them their large salaries in cash, so that they lacked a territo­rial basis for revolt. His successor found this system too arduous to maintain, and gave them...

\textsuperscript{12} Satish Chandra, \textit{Parties and politics at the Mughal court}, Delhi, 1972, Introduction, P.XXXV.
assignments on the land revenue, in other words tracts of land from which they collected the revenue in lieu of a salary. The obvious danger of this practice was countered in two ways. The first was rotation of office; Mughal officers rarely held high appointments, such as governorships, for more than three or four years at a time. The second was the resumption of thin property at death. The assignments of land were for life only; the next generation had to start from the bottom with an official appointment.  

The Mughal nobles were nearly always in heavy debt and this they tided over with through advances from the treasury. After death the property was confiscated and the debts were settled. The death-duties amounted to hundred percent. Thus they spent heavily all through while they were alive. Thus the Mughal nobility was an official aristocracy which was hereditary as a class but not individualistic. The class was land-holding but was not feudal.

While extending our last part of the conclusion, we must conclude upon the lines of the jagirdari crisis which was one of the most important reasons for the empire's decline.

By the end of the seventeenth century the jagirdari system had started to show rampant signs of disintegration. There was an unprecedented increase in the number of grants of mansabdari, at the time of which there were no available jagirs for assignment. After Aurangzeb, the bulk of the Khalisa lands were now turned into jagirs. Emergency forces were recruited on cash payments at times which indicated that the central government had no control over the jagirdars. The mansabdars had been reduced to such financial straits that they could not maintain any more their full contingents. Thus the military system had been corroded of its capacity and integrity. Dissatisfied jagirdars could not ensure military and executive efficiency because of their lack of organisational capacities. The jagirdari crisis resulted in the exploitation of the peasantry. The intermediaries or the zamindars rack-rented the peasantry so as to fulfill their own desires. One of the chief defects of the jagirdari system from the beginning was the constant transfer of jagirs as a result of which the zamindars and peasantry were rack-rented, the ruin of cultivation followed and indirectly resulted the increase in the number of mansabdars. Thus the jagirdari crisis accentuated the tottering Mughal empire towards virtual disaster and collapse, as it meant the collapse of the institution of the nobility.