

Royal Karkhanas Under the Mughals

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Abstract

Factory means the place where the workshop is generally located for the use of common people but in the middle ages the sound of this word was very different. Medieval historians have used it in a broader sense. According to which the factory included other things besides the work schools. Such as personal services of the royal court of Sultan and animal fences etc. The Mughals used the word Bayutat, which is the plural of the Arabic language word Bait. The meaning of Bait is home. Hence the meaning of Bayutat in the context of Gharbar was sufficiently clear to the Mughal administrators. Factories or Bayutat as the name of this department included their factories and stores that the government used to maintain for the use of the state. From pearl and diamond, gems to swords, to guns and heavy ammunition, the purchase and maintenance was the responsibility of this department. Bayutat were also responsible for the maintenance of pony animals carrying loads, horses, elephants for the army and other animals for royal hunting. This department not only procured and stored all kinds of goods but was also the largest agency for the manufacture of weapon and luxuries for the war. Although the ownership and management of the Bayutat was in the hands of the state but it was completely run commercially.

Key words : *Bayutat, Anantpuram, Remuneration, Collapsed, Sophisticated, Obligation, Innumerable*

Introduction

The role of factories was important not only in the domestic but also in the military and financial sector of the Mughal Empire, in addition to the industrial progress of the state. The luxuries of the medieval rulers were necessary for the decoration of their courts, the goods and the beauty of Antapuram, which were difficult to manufacture in the general market. Therefore the rulers were obliged to build government factories for their construction. K.M. Ashraf is of the view that the system of factories may have been derived from Farus but in fact the offerings of the factories also came in the time of the Mauryan rulers, Alauddin Khilji and Firoz Tughlaq. Government enterprises made a variety of dresses for the royal families. There was a director general of factories. When the Sultan wanted to make something, first the royal orders were sent to Tashdarkhana and then sent to Khwaja Jahan-a-Sultanat. In the Mughal Empire, the government provided all the items of government need for itself. For this the government itself produced almost all the goods. Apart from this, the Mughals had a very fast attitude towards their servants and people.

Due to lack of large-scale production, the general market could not meet the various important requirements of the government. Today, the government which buys ready-made goods from the market or orders the contractors to provide large quantities of goods was not possible during that period of cottage industries. Therefore the government had no choice but to produce the goods of its own requirements. It can be estimated from how big the state's commodities were required that the king used to provide dresses to each of his mansabdars according to the season twice a year in the winter and rainy seasons. Therefore, the government department had to keep a large quantity of cloth and dress ready for its annual requirements. The state itself ran workshops to ensure the supply of these goods. From the observations of the court historians and foreign travelers, it can be estimated that how much Mughal emperor took interest in factories and workshops. Abul Fazal writes, "The emperor pays great attention to a wide variety of things, skilled artisans and experts have been settled in the country to teach people improved method of production. The royal workshops located in Lahore, Agra, Fatehpur, Ahmadabad and Gujarat make many unique specimens of workmanship, the craftsmen are well looked after and due to this the clever craftsmen here have become skilled in their work soon... . There are royal workshops that provide everything that is made in other countries.

At the end of the 17th century, French Doctor Bernier came to the Mughal capital saw work in these factories. He writes, "Large rooms can be seen in many places in the cities which are called factory or the workshop of the artisans. In one of the rooms, the artisans are engaged in embroidery under the supervision of a master, Goldsmiths in the second room and painters in the third. In the fourth who polished lacquer, in the fifth tailor and cobbler, in the sixth, men who made silk and

art work. Means those who make fine muslin with which zaridar turban and waistbands are made, creating pajamas of women on which beautiful embroidery is done. The artisans came to their respective workshops every morning and work there all day and return to their homes in the evening. The goldsmith trains his son to be goldsmith and the hakim (doctor) of city trains his son to be a hakim. Nobody establishes a marriage relationship outside their ancestral occupation or business. Both Hindus and Muslims are equally staunch in following this custom.

Nature of Imperial Workshops

These government factories were run on the basis of large scale industries, in which the raw material and workshops were provided by the government. The relation of the artisan who actually produced was limited to get remuneration only. The artisans were not entitled to consume these goods. Even then, these industries could not take the form of a real commercial factory as these factories used to produce goods according to the interest of the emperors and in them the brilliance of workmanship was seen. The cost of production of these goods was also kept accurately, but it was not a decisive aspect of production. The government had no shortage of funds and there was no limit to the emperor's best interest and imagination.

In such circumstances it was not possible to develop factories as commercial industry, on the contrary, these factories depended only on the interests and choice of the emperors and on the government's requirements. The definite result of this was that with the fall of the Mughal Empire, these factories also collapsed. The biggest advantage of these government factories was that in the system, the artisans were highly encouraged to refine their art. The quality of the goods was based on the sophisticated interest of the emperors and set the pattern for the country's artisans. This led to the exchange of skilled workmanship. The work was carried on from generation to generation, that is why even when the Mughal Empire and its factories were not there, the work remained in the country and continued.

The Administration of Mughal Imperial Workshops

Under the Mughals the administration of Imperial workshops were very well organized. The information about how these factories functioned is available from the details of foreign travelers who used to visit the Mughal court. Diwan-a Bayutat was very important in relation to factories in Akbar's time. Later, the responsibility of the entire department was handed over to him and his position in the administrative machinery stabilized. Now he was called Mir-i-Saman. During Jahangir's time there is enough substantial mention of obligations about Mir-i-Saman.

Mir-i-Saman

As a regard the administration of the Karkhanas, as far as the officers of this department are concerned, Mir-i-Saman was the chief executive officer who was responsible for the smooth running and monitoring of the department. He was

placed in-charge of the internal working of the karkhanas or Bayutat, including factories and stores owned and managed by the state for its own purposes, not only in the capital but in every provincial capital as well as in different parts of the empire.

Diwan-i-Bayutat

Diwan-i-Bayutat was a very high ranking officer and mainly handled the financial responsibility of the department.

Mustaufi (Auditor)

He audited the accounts of the Karkhanas, verified the expenditure with vouchers, prepared a statement, signed it himself, put it before the diwan of the department and finally had the seal of the Mir-i-Saman put to it.

Darogha (Officer Superintendent)

Each branch of the factory had a inspector who had direct relations with the artisans of his branch. He used to distribute work daily to the artisans and was responsible for the raw material given to them.

Mushriff-i-Kul o-juj (Accountant)

Mushriff-i-kul was the chief accountant of the department and he had one accountant (Mushriff) in each branch of the department

Tahvildar (Cashier and Store Keeper)

Every factory had a Tahvildar like the inspector (Darogha) who was in-charge of the goods and cash requirements for his branch.

Darogha-i- Kachheri (Eshtablishment Officer)

He was the officer in-charge for the general supervision of the establishment. It was his duty to see that all papers and registers were taken from one officer to another, properly. He was also to see that no one behaved rudely towards the clerks and the servants of the office. He locked the door of the office with seal of the officer concerned and put his own seal, on each. Thus he appears to have been the head of the clerical establishment of the entire department.

Nazir

Nazir's position was below the Diwan. It was the receiving officer who ensured that the work could be done more efficiently and correctly. As far as the actual work of the department was concerned, Nazir was more concerned with financial side than the executive side of the department. His position was definitely below that of Diwan and in no way was he equivalent to Diwan.

Duties of the officers

As far as the duties of these officers are concerned as the head of the department, Mir-i-Saman was handled by the executive side. He monitored the internal work of each branch. Very important matters or big deals he used to put before the emperor and dealt with everyday matters himself. The Diwan's task was to handle

the financial responsibility of their department. In this form he had to take work from Nazir, Mushtaffi and Mushriff. In other cases, he also took care of the requirements of the factories. But he used to give information about each case to Mir-i-Saman. As a rule, he had to act on the advice of Mir-i-Saman. Just like documents related to the financial matters came through Diwan and Mustafi to Mir-i-Saman, he used to stamp without reading the details. Similarly, in other cases, Diwan believes on the decisions of Mir-i-Saman. Nazir had no clear rights and obligations and worked only with the Diwan. Due to his presence, the task of reviewing the accounts was simplified before presenting the accounts to the Central Audit Department. Mustafi gathered all the necessary papers and daily entry booklet especially from the Tehsildars and Mushriffs, and details of daily cash receipt and delivery. He used to get every detail mentioned in the account one by one and get them signed by the Diwan. If the Diwan wanted an explanation, Mustafi would have written it with his own pen. When the account was approved, he used to prepare a demand letter for money, taking the signature of the Diwan and handing it over to the court officer so that the money could be obtained. It was the responsibility of the Diwan to see that no one in his department had any difficulty. He was responsible for all the deals and articles passing through his hand. The money required for the needs of the branch was with the Tehsildar. The stock of raw materials required for the work done in the particular branch was also kept by him. Taking money from him, the Darogha distributed to the artisans working under him. In the evening, the Darogha used to take back the artisans from whatever stage of manufacture they were in and write the amount of work of each artisan and submit the items to the Tehsildar. Uncompleted items were released the next day and were used to be given to the artisans by the Darogha. This process kept on repeating until the object was completely finished. On completion of the work, the remuneration for the total days of work on the basis of these regular entries, and the expenditure on raw materials was also calculated based on which the cost of that commodity was determined. In the report made in the end, the cost price of that item was also mentioned along with the name of the artisan and the name of their inspector (Darogha) who supervised. In this way, the Tehsildar and the Darogha had direct contact with the artisans. The Tehsildar kept the stock of the necessary money and raw material. The Inspector distributed it among the artisans and supervised the work. The Musharif of the same branch used to keep a daily account of the money being paid in advance and entries of the raw material, and the work done was handed over to Mustafi. The Tehsildar, Daroghas and Musharif were jointly responsible for this. Mir-i-Saman and Diwan-i-Bayutat both had the right to enter the court and palace for the matters related to their obligations to the Emperor. But Mir-i-Saman was preferred and he also had the right to put the requirement of his department in front of the Emperor.

Statement of Financial Requirements

Mir-i-Saman prepared details of financial requirements of factories on half-yearly basis and submitted them for approval of the emperor. The royal approval was in the form of a Farman called *Barat/Brat*. Cash was to be kept in account of the quantity of items in the rest of the stores, accountability for all the expenses incurred on various works in the process of production, which was periodically put to the test before the emperor. In this account, there was also a system for the acceptance of sudden reading expenses which were not approved in the half-yearly budget. On such occasions the emperor used to give permission to manufacture any object of his interest. And above the demand given by other departments or by Shahzade and rich also gave permission. And the work also approved the fixed prices of the goods by the accounts department of the factories.

Status of the Artisans and Workmen

Very little information is available regarding the economic condition of the workmen of Karkhanas. Some information in this regard is found in Babur's memoir, *Ain-i-Akbari* and comments of foreign travellers. In his memoir Babur mentions innumerable workmen of all kinds. According to him, having innumerable artisans in various shilpa (crafts) and industries was beneficial in India. Abul Fazl speaks of masters and artisans settling in the country. He also mentions the remuneration of various categories of skilled and unskilled workers. Skilled artisans had no independent workshop in Delhi.⁴³ Most artisans considered themselves fortunate when they went to work in Royal factories. Under the system of Imperial factories, it seems that the artisans used to get protection, encouragement and security. The condition of the workers in the 17th century can be estimated from the rate of daily wages given in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Moreland has matched it to modern (1920) currency. Common labors get 2 Dams / 5 Aane, slightly higher workmen get 3-4 Dams / 8 and half Aane, Carpenters get 3-7 Dams / 8 and half Aane to one and half rupee, The slaves of the lowest class of court get 12 Aane per month. The artisans had to work all day long under the strict supervision of ordinary workers and on the instructions of their instructor. Occasionally, there are references by Akbar, Jahangir and Aurangzeb to forgive or reduce the tax of artisans. Akbar tried to give relief to the workmen of karkhanas by giving many types of tax exemptions. Mirat-a-Ahmadi, mentions that Aurangzeb abolished various kinds of license tax imposed on artisans. Earlier, artisans had to pay many kinds of taxes which affected their economic condition.

There were also favourable conditions for the artisans. Most importantly, they were encouraged by the emperor. Akbar had instructed certain categories of his Mansabdars and Nobles to wear special type of local clothes. He also persuaded the carpet weavers of Persia to immigrate to Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore. This type of shelter has led to a major development of the country's silk, carpet and shawl

industries. The condition of the workmen engaged in these works also improved. Akbar sent smart artisans to Goa to get information about the various art skills of the time and tell the Emperor about them. The skills of the artisans returning from there were praised. The second favorable thing was to encourage the artisans by some powerful and influential rich class. The Royal workshops proved to be helpful in spreading talent and raising the cultural level of the country. Not all skilled and trained artisans or untrained got a place in these workshops. The remaining people were kept by the rich and the king. This encouraged the arts and crafts.

The Extent of Mughal Karkhanas

Abul Fazl mentions the following karkhana in his *Ain-i-Akbari*, the treasuries, the mint, the *Farrash Khana*, illumination and lights, workshops for making the royal seals, the *abdarkhana* (For water), the kitchen, *Mewakhana* (the fruitery), *Khushbukhana* (the perfumery), the wardrob and the bedding and mattresses, the workshops for manufacture of shawls and textiles, *Kurkyaraqkhana* and *toshkhana* (for dresses and different types of stuff used for weaving apparel etc.)

During Mughal royal Karkhanas were scattered all over India. The main centers of Karkhanas were **Kashmir, Lahore, Agra, Ahmadabad, Fatehpur and Burhanpur**. The products produced in those workshops were very fine and their patterns, figures and variety attracted the foreign travellers. The royal patronage to the workshops led to the development of these karkhanas. In these workshops all kinds of hair weaving and silk spinning was done. The workshop of Kashmir was very famous. Its shawls were very fine. In Agra, Patna, and Lahore similar shawls were manufactured but these shawls could not reach the fineness of Kashmir shawls. A number of industries were flourished at Lahore. Silken, woolen, cotton and mixed goods both plain and flowered were produced there. Lahore was the main center where art and craft was practiced.⁵⁰ it was the main center of producing shawls. There were more than thousand workshops of shawls in Lahore. A kind of shawl called *Mayan* was chiefly woven there which consisted of silk and wool mixed. But it was not a regular shawl, because it was used for *Chiras* (turbans) and *fotas* (loin bands) etc. Silk industry was also flourished there, which produced brocades and velvets and were on sale in Agra. Sialkot, Bajwara and Sultanpur were also famous for embroidery. **Gujrat** was famous not only for the fertility of soil but also for the manufacture of silk and brocades, as cited by Ali Muhammad khan in his *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*.⁵⁴ City of Ahmadabad was very famous for the karkhanas producing velvet embroidered with gold and silver.

In *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Abul Fazl* described that there were a number of workshops established in **Agra**. The most famous was the weaver's shops where all sorts of textiles were produced. Among the Mughals, Akbar had keen interest in developing the karkhanas. He had a mechanical turn of mind. During the reign of Akbar a

number of fine textiles were manufactured at **Agra** and **Fatehpur Sikri**, good cotton cloth at **Patna**, in **Gujarat** and **Burhanpur** in **Khandesh** while **Sonagaon** was famous for its fine fabrics, the best and finest clothes were made of cotton all over India.

Conclusion

The valuable and artistic items manufactured in the provincial factories of the Capital should be introduced in the *Diwan-i-Aam* and also the artisan who made it with the exhibits. This arrangement gave the emperor an opportunity to get to know the artisans personally. The artisans were also encouraged to get their work done so that they could get a government job in Royal Karkhanas and get the chance to appear before the emperor, which they considered the greatest honour. In this way, the credit for achievement was not only given to the department and its high officials but also to the artisans. Sometimes they were rewarded with prizes for original and best work and unique workmanship.

This arrangement of central government factories not only met the needs of the state at reasonable prices but also encouraged industries in different parts of the country. The artisans working in the Royal workshop worked very diligently so that they could receive praise and reward from the emperor. There is no example found of the standard set in the gold and silver works, copperware, textiles and carpet industry, pulp and ivory work in Mughal period. Some of these crafts have been forgotten. The secret of making transparent muslin of Dhaka and light weight shawls of Kashmir is lost forever. The beauty of these items can be estimated from only a few remains of Mughal period.

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