
UNIT 12 COMPOSITION OF NOBILITY*

Structure

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit 11, we have discussed the working of the two important administrative institutions of the Mughal empire – *mansab* and *jagir*. In this unit we shall discuss the chief characteristics of the Mughal ruling class during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After reading this Unit you will:

- know about the origins and development of the Mughal nobility;
- understand the racial composition of the nobility
- learn about its organization;
- have some idea about the share of the nobility in the revenue resources of the empire;
- get information about the socio-economic role of the nobility; and
- become familiar with the living standard of the nobility.

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12.1 INTRODUCTION

The Mughal ruling class or the nobility as it is commonly designated was a heterogeneous mass comprising both civil bureaucrats as well as military officers, **The Mughal ruling class was multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-regional in character.** The nobility was next to the kingship and all the important central as well as state ministers and officers and also the provincial governors (*subedars*) were part of it. They all held ranks (*mansab*) and received their salary either in cash (*naqd*) or through assignment of the revenues of various territories (*jagir*). Therefore, the numerical strength of the *mansabdars* (nobles) materially influenced not only politics and administration, but also the economy of the Empire.

In the present Unit we would be discussing the broad features of the nature and pattern of nobility under the Mughals. Our focus would be Akbar but we would also be elaborating on the changing pattern in the composition of the nobility under Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.

12.2 THE NOBILITY UNDER BABUR AND HUMAYUN

The nobility which accompanied Babur to Hindustan largely comprised Turanis (Central Asian 'Begs') and a few Iranis. After the battle of Panipat (1526), some Afghan and Indian nobles of Sikandar Lodi's camp were admitted in his higher bureaucracy. They were soon taken into confidence and given important assignments. Many local chieftains also accepted Babur's suzerainty and became his allies in subsequent battles. Thus, after the battle of Panipat, the ruling class under Babur no longer remained purely Turani. It appears from the *Baburnama* that out of a total of 116 nobles, 31 were Indians including Afghans and Shaikhzadas.

During the early years of Humayun's reign, there was a decline in the number of Indian nobles as many of the Afghan nobles deserted the Mughal service and joined Bahadur Shah of Gujarat. However, a great change occurred in Humayun's nobility between 1540 and 1555, when most of his Turani nobles deserted him and joined Mirza Kamran. Only twenty-six persons in all accompanied him to Iran, seven of whom were Iranis. But during his stay in Iran, many more Iranis joined him. They accompanied Humayun from Iran to take Qandahar and Kabul. The position of Iranis further improved as a number of Iranis came to Kabul and joined Humayun's service during his stay at Kabul between 1545-55.

At the same time when Iranis increased in the nobility, Humayun raised a new Turani nobility by promoting low ranking Turani nobles to counter the power of the old nobility, thereby strengthening his position. There were 57 nobles who accompanied Humayun back to India, of whom 27 were Turanis and 21 Iranis. This new nobility served him loyally throughout his contest with Mirza Kamran between 1545 and 1555, and followed him in the conquest of Hindustan. In recognition of their services, important assignments were generally given to this section of nobility.

Although by raising Iranis and low ranking Turanis to higher ranks, Humayun could create a loyal ruling class which helped him in reconquering India, the dominant sections in his nobility were still confined to a limited number of class-cum-family groups with their roots in Central Asian traditions.

Thus, the Mughal nobility at its formative stage under Babur and Humayun was not a disciplined and effective organization to cope with the problems facing the newly established Empire in India. Babur and Humayun did not fully succeed in making it loyal and subservient to them even by bringing about a few changes in its composition.

12.3 DEVELOPMENT UNDER AKBAR

The position remained unchanged during the early years of Akbar's reign. The two foreign elements Turanis and Iranis enjoyed a predominant position. After the dismissal of Bairam Khan, a crisis developed at the court which ultimately led to the rebellion of the Turani nobles. To balance their pressure, Akbar introduced two new elements – Indian Muslims and Rajputs in his nobility. He also promoted Iranis to higher ranks as a reward for their loyalty during the crisis. Besides those Iranis who were already in the service of Humayun or under Bairam Khan, a large number came to India in search of employment during this period. Many factors were responsible for their migration from Iran. The important one was the unfavourable religious atmosphere for the Sunnis in the Safavi Iran during the sixteenth century. A good number of them proceeded to India in search of security as they were apprehensive of punishment by the Safavi rulers. Many of them were highly trained in administrative affairs and belonged to the noted families of Iran. In India, they were welcomed and admitted by Akbar in his service and given suitable posts. Some of them were introduced to the Mughal Court by their relatives who were already in the Mughal service. Besides them, many others came as adventurers in search of better opportunities knowing that the Mughal court was open to talent. Thus, the position of Iranis in the Mughal ruling class not only became stable and strong but also self-perpetuating.

From 1561, that is, after the exit of Bairam Khan, Akbar started recruiting Rajputs and Shaikhzadas (Indian Muslims) in his service. In order to win recruits from these sections, he adopted certain measures of placating and befriending them. For instance, he established matrimonial relations with the Rajput Chieftains, abolished pilgrimage tax (1562) and the *jiziya* (1564) which was imposed earlier on the Hindus. Akbar's attitude towards Rajputs changed radically after the suppression of the Uzbek rebellion as he adopted a vigorous policy of reducing them to submission by force.

During the period 1575-80, Akbar, with a view of creating wider support for the Empire amongst the Muslim Communities in India, also adopted an attitude of promoting and befriending the Indian Muslims through several conciliatory measures. By adopting these measures Akbar was successful in building a loyal and efficient bureaucracy and in running his government effectively without having any serious crisis in his nobility for a very long time. But, at the same time, he failed to provide any solution to the problem of succession; as a result of which the nobility tended to divide into factions supporting rival princes aspirant for the throne.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Examine the nature of the nobility at its formative stage under Babur and Humayun.

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- ii) Discuss changes in Akbar's attitude towards various elements of his nobility.

12.4 COMPOSITION OF THE MUGHAL NOBILITY

After its first phase of development during the reign of Babur and Humayun and the early years of Akbar, the Mughal nobility came to consist of certain well-recognised racial groups. The important ones were Turanis, Iranis, Afghans, Shaikhzadas, Rajputs and also the Deccanis (Bijapuris, Haiderabadis and Marathas). Thus, it was an 'International' ruling class; for recruitment 'nationality' was no bar. Chandra Bhan Brahman has given an account of this international and heterogeneous character of the Mughal nobility towards the close of Shahjahan's reign. Among European observers Bernier also speaks of the presence of Uzbeks, Persians, Arabs and Turks or their descendants in the Mughal Court. However, mere fulfillment of certain criteria of merit and competence was not the sole requirement to gain entry into it; clan or family links were the most important considerations for recruitment and ordinary people, with whatever merit to their credit, were normally not admitted to this aristocratic class of the society.

The *khanazads* (the house-born ones), who were the sons and descendants of those officers (*mansabdars*) who were already in the Mughal service, were the best and foremost claimants. They constituted almost half of the ruling class throughout the Mughal period and the remaining half of the ruling class comprised of variety of persons not belonging to the families already in service.

The *zamindars* or the chieftains were one of them. Though they had been in the state service ever since the time of Delhi Sultans, they attained great importance under Akbar who granted them high *mansabs* and *jagirs* in various parts of the Empire. These *jagirs* were in addition to their ancestral domains which were now treated as their *watan jagir* (See **Unit 11**).

Nobles and high officers of other states were also taken into the Mughal nobility on account of their experience, status and influence. Leading commanders of the enemy state, in particular, were offered tempting ranks to make them desert their masters. A very small portion of the Mughal nobility consisted of persons belonging to the accountant castes, that is, *Khatris*, *Kayasthas*, etc. They were usually appointed in the financial departments on low ranks, but they could rise to higher ones. Todar Mal under Akbar and Raja Raghunath under Aurangzeb belonged to this category. They served as *diwan* and received high ranks (*mansabs*).

Scholars, saints/sufis and theologians, etc. also received ranks and offices in the Mughal service. Abul Fazl under Akbar, Sadullah Khan and Danishmand Khan during Shah Jahan's reign, and Hakim Alaul Mulk Tuni Fazil Khan and Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri in Aurangzeb's period are some of the noteworthy examples of this class.

12.4.1 Racial and Religious Groups

As mentioned earlier, there were certain well-recognised racial groups – Turanis, Iranis,

Afghans, Shaikhzadas, Rajputs and Marathas – who provided new recruits for the Mughal ruling class. These elements were taken into the Mughal service largely as a result of historical circumstances, but partly (as for example the Rajputs) as a result of planned imperial policy of integrating all these elements into a single imperial service. For that purpose, very often, officers of various groups were assigned to serve under one superior officer. Akbar's policy of *sulh kul* was also partly motivated by a desire to employ persons of diverse religious beliefs – Sunnis (Turanis and Shaikhzadas), Shias (including many Iranis) and Hindus (Rajputs) – and to prevent sectarian differences among them from interfering with the loyalty to the throne.

12.4.2 The Foreign Elements – Turanis and Iranis

The foreign elements in the Mughal nobility comprised largely the Turanis and Iranis. By Turanis we mean persons coming from Central Asia, where the Turkish languages were spoken; while Iranis (also called Khurasanis and Iraqis) were largely the Persian speaking people from Herat upto Baghdad. According to the *Ai 'n-i Akbari*, about 70 per cent of Akbar's nobles were foreigners by origin. This high proportion of foreigners continued under Akbar's successors and among them Iranis enjoyed the most dominant position. In the early years of Jahangir's reign, Mirza Aziz Koka had alleged that the Emperor was giving undue favours to Iranis and Shaikhzadas while the Turanis and Rajputs were neglected. Though Shah Jahan tried hard to emphasize the Central Asian affiliations of the Mughal dynasty, it had no adverse effect on the position of Iranis under him. The greater part of Aurangzeb's nobility, according to Bernier, consisted of Persians who, according to Tavernier, occupied the highest posts in the Mughal Empire.

The Iranis appear to have been constantly migrating to India from different regions of Safavid Iran during the 16-17 centuries owing to various social and political reasons (as pointed out above in **Unit 12.3**).

Athar Ali finds a declining trend in the number of nobles directly coming from foreign countries ever since the time of Akbar. This decline of foreigners, according to him, further sharpened during the long reign of Aurangzeb. The fall of the Uzbek and Safavi kingdoms and the concentration of Aurangzeb's attention in the Deccan affairs for a long period, and, his not following a forward or militaristic policy in the North-West, have been suggested as some important reasons for the decline of direct foreign recruitments. The Iranis, however, could maintain their dominant position in the nobility because of the continuous influx of Iranis from the Deccan Sultanates. Muqarrab Khan, Qizilbash Khan and Mir Jumla (under Shah Jahan); Ali Mardan Khan Haiderabadi, Abdur Razzaq Lari and Mahabat Khan Haiderabadi (under Aurangzeb) are some of the important examples of Irani nobles from the Deccan. The Sunni orthodoxy of the Emperor also did not affect the position of Iranis.

12.4.3 The Afghans

The Afghans had been distrusted by the Mughals, especially suspected after the Mughal restoration under Humayun. Most of them were kept at a distance by Akbar. They, however, improved their position under Jahangir who assigned a high position to Khan Jahan Lodi. During Shah Jahan's reign, the Afghans again lost the imperial trust and suffered a setback after Khan Jahan Lodi's rebellion. During the later years of Aurangzeb's reign, however, the number of the Afghan nobles considerably increased. This was mainly because of the influx from the Bijapur kingdom.

12.4.4 Indian Muslims (*Shaikhzadas*)

The Indian Muslims, better known as *Shaikhzadas*, comprised mainly the Saiyids of Barha and the Kambus and certain other important clans.

The Saiyids of Barha and the Kambus who had enjoyed a leading position since Akbar's time, were no longer equally prominent during Aurangzeb's reign. More particularly, the Saiyids of Barha, who, on account of their martial qualities, once enjoyed the honour of constituting the vanguard of the Mughals armies, were distrusted by Aurangzeb. It was perhaps because they had been loyal supporters of Dara Shukoh in the war of succession.

Some of the Kashmiris also got prominence during the later years of Aurangzeb's reign; Inayatullah Kashmiri was one of the favourite nobles of the Emperor.

12.4.5 Rajputs and Other Hindus

As has been discussed above, Rajput Chiefs and other Hindu nobles were inducted in the Mughal nobility during the reign of Akbar who adopted a friendly and liberal attitude towards them. It is clear from the contemporary sources that the Hindu nobles in general and Rajput Chiefs in particular achieved a position of respect and honour in the reign of Akbar which they continued to enjoy down to Aurangzeb's reign. Shah Jahan was a devout Muslim, who adopted several measures to display his orthodoxy. Yet there was a great increase in the number of Rajput *masabdars* during his reign. Aurangzeb was also a devout Muslim and he is generally blamed for adopting anti-Hindu policies. But the fact remains that during the early years of his reign, the position of the Rajput nobles actually improved over what it had been in Shah Jahan's time. There had been no Rajput officer throughout the reign of Shah Jahan holding the rank of 7000 zat. Now Mirza Raja Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh were promoted to the rank of 7000 zat/7000 sawar. Similarly, ever since Raja Man Singh's recall from Bengal in 1606, no Rajput noble had been entrusted with an important province. In 1665, Jai Singh was appointed the viceroy of the Deccan, the highest and most important charge which normally only princes were entrusted with. Jaswant Singh was also twice appointed governor of Gujarat in 1659-61 and 1670-72. It may be pointed out that with a slight fall (21.6 per cent) in the first phase of Aurangzeb's reign (1658-78), the number of Hindu *mansabdars* remained almost the same what it had been during Akbar (22.5 per cent) and Shah Jahan's (22.4 per cent). This may be better appreciated from the following Table:

	Akbar (1595)	Shah Jahan (1628-58)	Aurangzeb (1658-78) (1679-1707)	
A Total <i>mansabdars</i>	98	437	486	575
B. Hindus	22	98	105	182
B. as % of A	22.5	22.4	21.6	31.6

During the last phase of Aurangzeb's reign (1679-1707), however, the proportion of the Hindu nobles appreciated to 31.6 per cent. In other words, during this time there were more Hindus in service than at any preceding period. The increase in the number of Hindus during this period was because of the influx of the Marathas who began to outnumber the Rajputs in the nobility.

12.4.6 Marathas and Other Deccanis

The recruitment of Marathas began during the reign of Shah Jahan at the time of

his Ahmednagar campaign. Since Marathas played an important role in the Deccan affairs, they were steadily recruited to the Mughal nobility. Aurangzeb, too, admitted the Marathas on a large scale by granting high ranks to some of them. The Mughal attempt to win over the Maratha chieftains by granting them high mansabs, however, proved a failure. The allegiance of the Maratha nobles under Aurangzeb was always unstable and, therefore, they never attained any real position of influence within the Mughal ruling class.

As regards the other Deccanis, they were the nobles who belonged to the Deccan kingdoms of Bijapur or Golkunda before joining Mughal service. They could be of Indian origin such as Afghans, Shaikhzadas or Indian Muslims; or of foreign origin like Iranis and Turanis. It appears that the Deccanis did not form a very large section of Aurangzeb's nobility in the first period (being 58 or 11.8 per cent of the 486 total *mansabdars*). They were regarded as a subordinate class of nobles; one-fourth of their total pay-claim was deducted according to the regulations for pay in the Deccan.

In the second period, however, the Deccani nobles (Bijapuris, Haiderabadis and Marathas) were recruited on a large scale (they were 160 or 27.8 per cent of the total 575 *mansabdars*). The influx of the Deccanis in the later years of Aurangzeb's reign was so great that it caused much resentment among the older section of the nobility – the *khanazadas*.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 What was the position of Rajputs in the Mughal nobility?

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- 2 Mention various ethnic groups that constituted the Mughal nobility.

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12.5 ORGANISATION OF THE NOBILITY

The Mughal nobility was organized within the framework of the *mansab* system, one of the two important institutions (the other being the *Jagir* system) which sustained the Mughal Empire for about 200 years. The *mansab* system was based on the principle of direct command i.e., all *mansabdars*, whatever be their rank, were directly subordinate to the Mughal Emperor.

Mansab System: Technically, *mansab* means office, position or rank. Under the Mughals the functions of *mansab* were threefold:

- i. it determined the status of its holder (the *mansabdar*) in the official hierarchy;
- ii. it fixed the pay of the *mansabdar* accordingly, and
- iii. it also laid upon him the obligation of maintaining a definite number of contingent with horses and equipment. Each officer was assigned a dual rank

(a pair of numbers) designated *zat* and *sawar*. *Zat* was a personal rank which determined the status of the *mansabdar* in the official hierarchy and also indicated his personal pay. The *sawar* rank was a military rank which determined the number of contingents the *mansabdar* was required to maintain and also fixed the payment for the maintenance of the required contingent. (For details see **Unit 11**).

The Mughal *mansabdar* received his pay as determined by his *zat* and *sawar* ranks either in cash (*naqd*) or in the form of territorial assignments (*Jagirs*).

For recruitment as *mansabdar* nationality was no bar. The *Khanazads* (or sons and descendants of *mansabdars* already in service) had the first claim to the appointment. The second source of recruitment were the immigrants from Iran and Central Asia. The third channel of recruitment was recommendation (*tajwiz*). Another category from which recruitment was made were the leading commanders of the enemy camp who were often tempted to desert their masters.

The Central ministers, princes of royal blood, provincial governors and important military commanders used to recommend persons for appointment and promotions. (For details, see **Unit 11**).

12.6 DISTRIBUTION OF REVENUE RESOURCES AMONG THE NOBILITY

A. Jan Qaisar and Shireen Moosvi has shown that 82% of the total revenue resources of the Empire was appropriated by 1,671 *mansabdars*. While the top 12 *mansabdars* controlled as much as 18.52% of the total income of the Empire, the remaining 1,149 *mansabdars* controlled only 30% of the revenue. Thus, there was an immense concentration of revenue resources in the hands of a few persons during the time of Akbar. This concentration continued under his successors. A. Jan Qaisar has calculated that 445 *mansabdars* under Shah Jahan claimed 61.5% of the revenue. And the top 25 *mansabdars* controlled 24.5% of the revenue. The salary of the *mansabdars* was very high. Khan-i Jahan Lodi's annual income from his *Jagirs* was 30 lacs of rupees out of which he spent 24 lacs on his establishment expenditure and the remaining 6 lacs were kept in saving. Mahabat Khan had an annual income of one crore rupees and he used to spend all that too. The pay claim of Asaf Khan during the reign of Shahjahan amounted to 50 lacs of rupees a year.

The nobles, by and large, drew their income from the land revenue. There was immense concentration of wealth in the hands of a very small number of persons comprising the core of the Mughal nobility. They did not spend the whole amount on their troopers which they claimed against their *sawar* ranks. This led to further concentration of wealth in the hands of the nobles.

12.7 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLE OF THE NOBILITY

The members of the Mughal nobility having accumulated enormous treasurers in specie, cash and jewels often invested it in trade, either by engaging in trade directly or by making capital advances to merchants. They also invested large amount of capital in sea-borne trade. Tavernier says, 'on arrival for embarkation at Surat, you find plenty of money. For it is the principal trade of the nobles of India to

place their money on speculation for Hormuz, Bassora and Mocha and even for Bantam, Achin and Philippenes'. Apart from the capital advances the Mughal nobles were also engaged in business investments. Sometimes they had their own ships which sailed to different ports laden with their own goods or, in some cases, with cargo of other merchants. Mir Jumla had frequent business deals with the English and sometimes also advanced money to the English factors. He was in a real sense a 'merchant prince'. His ships carried on trade between Arakan, Southern India, Bengal, Persia and Arabia.

It is also evident that nobles' commercial activities were not confined to foreign trade, it also extended to internal trade. If Mir Jumla offers the best example of a Mughal noble taking part in sea-borne trade, Shaista Khan is the best example of an aristocrat engaged in internal trade. He sought to obtain gains from trade during his viceroyalty of Gujarat and Bengal where he had tried to monopolize and control trade in many important articles of daily use like salt, supari (betel-nuts) and even the fodder of animals.

The nobles were also very much enthusiastic about luxury good and jewels from Europe. Shaista Khan was fond of purchasing of rarities of Europe especially the pearls and jewels. He purchased from Tavernier such articles during his governorship of Gujarat, Bengal and the Deccan. Manucci calls him a great amateur of precious stones.

12.8 LIVING STANDARD OF THE NOBILITY

With huge amount of money at their disposal the ruling class led a life of great pomp and show. They maintained large establishment of wives, servants, camels and horses. The household of which the *harem* was the main part must have absorbed a reasonably large sum. And, yet, they were left with substantial wealth that could be spent on the construction of stately houses and works of public utility.

From Shaikh Farid Bhakkari's biographical work *Zakhirat-ul-Khawarin* (1642), it appears that Mughal officers and nobles were fond of constructing attractive and imposing houses for their residence. Pelsaert mentions these houses as 'noble and pleasant with many apartments'. Inside many of these houses there were gardens and tanks and in hot weather the tanks were filled daily with fresh water, drawn by Oxen from the wells. In these gardens nobles used to hold grand feasts in honour of the Emperor. Manrique gives a detailed description of a dinner party in the house of Asaf Khan which indicates the lavishness and the sophistication with which the dinner was organized.

Similarly, a large number of works of public utility such as *sarais*, *hammams* (public baths), wells, step-wells (*baolis*), water tanks, markets, roads and gardens were also built by the nobles throughout the Empire. During the reign of Akbar, Murtaza Khan Bukhari built mosques, *sarais*, *khanqahs* and tanks at Lahore, Agra and Ahmadabad. Murtaza Khan Shaikh Farid Bukhari was a great builder of Akbar's time. In Ahmadabad he built a *sarai*, a mosque and other buildings. During Jahangir's reign, Abdur Kahim Khan Khanan, Azam Khan, Khwaja Jahan Kabuli, etc. were great builders.

The wives and staff of nobles also took equal interest in constructing works of public utility. We get several references about religious and educational buildings such as mosques, *madrasas*, *khanqahs*, tombs and temples (*devrah*) built by Mughal nobles. Some of the Hindu nobles and officers also built mosques. Construction of tombs during one's own life time and for the deceased persons of one's family was a popular trend in the Mughal period. Beautiful gardens were laid out around these imposing structures. In constructing these tombs, the nobles sometimes vied with each other. Tombs were also built for sufis by their disciples.

Mughal nobles and officers constructed public welfare buildings outside India.

A number of Irani nobles at the Mughal court are reported to have funded the construction of mosques, *sarais*, etc. in Iran. Many nobles and officers also founded cities, towns and villages in their native places or in the territories under their jurisdiction. Sometimes the old existing towns were renovated and beautified with gardens, trees, roads and structures of public utility. Whenever a new city or town was built it was provided with all the necessities of civil life and amenities of an urban settlement with the purpose of encouraging the people to settle down there. Laying out of gardens was a part of the nobles' cultural activities. Hakim Alimuddin Wazir Khan, the *Wakil* of Shahjahan built a new city at his native town Khabrot and handed it over to its residents. He also built there a market, a *sarai*, a step-well, mosque, *madrasa* and a dispensary and made an endowment for their maintenance.

A. Jan Qaisar has shown a linkage between social values and building activity of the Mughal elite. He says that these values were a continuation of the long established Indian traditions. Why the building activity was undertaken on such a scale? It seems that prestige factor was important. It nourished competitive spirit for cultural exercises with a view of scoring over their compatriots. The desire was to perpetuate one's name for indefinite period. The aspiration unfolded itself in both the forms of their activities, private and public. Religious sanction, too, spurred the elite to construct charitable works, particularly mosques. Role model/expectation also motivated the elite to perform charitable acts. Masses looked to affluent sections to provide public utilities which were culturally identifiable, for example, hospitals, mosques, *sarais*, etc. Masses expected that materially prosperous persons should alienate a part of their wealth in their favour. This role was played pretty well by the Mughal nobles. It also resulted in the distribution of material resources of whatever magnitude of the society among masses.

The nobles maintained their own *karkhanas* to manufacture luxury items of their own tastes and specifications for their personal and household consumption. Carpets, gold embroidered silks and high quality jewellery were the main items produced. Ali Mardan Khan maintained some *karkhanas* in Lahore and Kashmir where carpets and shawls were manufactured. Itiqad Khan also had great interest in shawl and wool industry of Kashmir and is said to have introduced new patterns in shawl, pattu, tabrezi and karbalai in wool. Besides, they also imported large number of luxury articles from different countries. The British and Dutch records give innumerable references to the demands made by the nobles for which they used to pay handsomely.

The nobles are also found spending large amount of money in charity. Some of them were very particular in giving gifts to the residents of their own native places. Mir Masum Bhakkari had fixed yearly, monthly, weekly and daily stipends for a large number of inhabitants of his native town Bhakkar. He also used to send gifts to his townsmen from the place of his postings.

Nobles had different hobbies to pass their leisure time such as hunting, horticulture, animal husbandry, alchemy etc. Many of them were also patrons of musicians and men of letters. Besides these and other sports activities, marriages in the family and festivals were other occasions where wealth was squandered freely by them.

Since there was no restriction and audit of their income and expenditure the nobles had their own '*sarkar*' or semi-autonomous administration which comprised his military contingent, harem, household staff, officials and servants.

Check your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the organization of the Mughal ruling class.
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- 2) How did the Mughal *mansabdars* utilize the immense revenue resources at their command?
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- 3) Describe the socio-economic role of the Mughal nobility.
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12.9 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have seen the evolution and development of the Mughal nobility through various stages. In the beginning it emerged as a Turani-dominated class but later as a result of political exigencies, others such as Iranis, Indian Muslims, Rajputs, Marathas, and Afghans were recruited. Thus, it became a heterogeneous ruling class. The Mughal ruling class was organized through *mansabdari* and *jagirdari*, the two important institutions whose efficient working sustained the Mughal Empire for about 200 years. The *mansabdars* constituted the ruling class which was not only a prosperous class but also the elite of the society. They enjoyed the security of wealth amassed during their tenure of service and left large legacies to their families. The nobles invested their accumulated treasures in trade either directly or by making capital advances to merchants. They also patronized luxury-goods and skilled artisans.

12.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 12.2
- 2) See Section 12.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 12.4.5
- 2) See Section 12.4

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 12.5

2) See Section 12.6

3) See Section 12.7

12.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Ali, Athar, (1997; New Edition) *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Anwar, Firdaus, (2001) *Nobility under the Mughals (1628-1658)* (New Delhi: Manohar).

Khan, Mohammad Afzal, (2016) *The Ruling Elite: Iranian Nobility under Shahjahan and Aurangzeb* (New Delhi: Viva Books).

Khan Iqtidar Alam, (2016) *The Mughal Nobility: Two Biographies* (New Delhi: Permanent Black).

12.12 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Patronage of Nobility under Akbar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vo48-qnUi3s>

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