

## **Administration system of the Mughal Empire in Subah Bangla**

**Introduction:** Government of the Mughal Empire had a highly centralized, bureaucratic government, headed by the Mughal emperor. The finance/revenue ministry was responsible for controlling revenues from the empire's territories and calculating tax revenues. The ministry of the military was headed by an officially titled Mir Bakhshi, who was in charge of military and messenger service. The ministry in charge of law/religious patronage was the responsibility of the *sadr as-sudra*, who appointed judges and managed charities and stipends.

The empire was divided into *suba* (provinces), each of which was headed by a provincial governor called a Subadar. The structure of the central government was mirrored at the provincial level; each *Suba* had its bakhshi, *sadr as-sudr*, and finance minister who reported directly to the central government rather than the Subahdar. Subas were subdivided into administrative units known as *Sarker* which were further divided into groups of Villages known as *Parganas*. Here it is discussed on the administration system of the Mughal Empire in Subah Bangla.

With the Mughal conquest, the kingdom of Bengal turned into a Province (henceforth called Subah) of the Mughal Empire. For administrative convenience, the Subah was divided into several Sarkars which were further subdivided into Mahals or Parganas. As the head of the provincial administration, the Subahdar had twofold responsibilities, i.e., the defense of the province, along with the maintenance of peace and order, and civil administration.

The Subah of Bengal was divided into 19 Sarkars, each of which was placed in charge of a Faujdar (military head). The faujdar was responsible for the maintenance of peace and the proper implementation of imperial edicts. Working under the close supervision of the Subahdar. The faujdar assisted the revenue officials in collecting dues from recalcitrant Zamindars and Raiyats.

Each Sarkar was divided into several Parganas. There were 628 parganas in Bengal. The pargana was mainly a revenue unit. The Amil was the chief of a pargana and there were Amins, Karkuns, and Qanungos to assist him. Since the revenue collection involved some law and order situations. The pargana staff was required to perform administrative duties as well. These aside, there were some semi-government personnel called Chaudhuris who represented the peasants to the proper authorities concerning their rights and privileges. The Muqaddam (village headman), on the other hand, assisted the revenue personnel in the smooth collection of rents and helped maintain peace and order in the locality.

**The Subahdar:** The Subahdar, appointed by the emperor on the advice of the Wazir-e-Ala (Prime Minister) usually for 4-5 years, was under the direct control of the center. Though they worked under the general supervision of the Subahdar, the provincial officers were, in reality, responsible to their counterparts at the center. Such a system of checks on the authority of the provincial administration made it difficult for the Subahdars to put undue pressure on subordinate officers or neglect their duties. The weakening of central authority and its increasing dependence on the flow of revenues from Bengal led to the establishment of the semi-independent Nawabi rule in Bengal soon after the death of Aurangzeb (1707). Apart from the Subahdar, the province had some other important officers like the diwan, Bakhshi, Sadr, kotwal, Mir Bahr, and Waqianavis.

**The Diwan:** Below the Subahdar, but not subordinate to him, was the Diwan appointed by the central government. As the head of the finance department, the provincial diwan's main function was to oversee revenue administration. The diwan controlled the income and

expenditure of the Subah, an advantageous position that made the former dependent on the latter in matters of the required funds. The system of appointment of the provincial diwan by the emperor fell into disuse during the time of Murshid Quli Khan, who wielded both the responsibilities of Diwan and Subahdar. Subsequently, the provincial Diwan was appointed by the nawab-Subahdar with the mere approval of the emperor whose control over the Subah. The diwan was to be in constant touch with the revenue staff in the pargana, the hub of rural administration. It was in his office that all the returns of assessment and realization of revenues from the parganas were audited and consolidated into abstracts for transmission to the central ministry of finance.

**The Bakhshi:** The Bakhshi, the counterpart of the Mir-Bakhshi (central Bakhshi) in the province, was responsible for the proper administration of the military department. He used to supervise the training, efficiency, and discipline of the armed forces maintained by the Mansabdars. He also advised the Subahdar on military affairs and when necessary, made arrangements for expeditions.

**The Sadr:** The provincial Sadr (Head of the religious department, charity, and grant) mainly looked after religious affairs. In the absence of Qazis (Judge), the Sadr dispensed with judicial matters. He used to make recommendations to the central Sadr for grants of rent-free lands for religious and educational purposes (madad-i-mash), and other charitable grants.

**The Kotwal:** As the chief of the police administration, the Kotwal maintained internal peace and security. Through a network of agents, he received information about the movements of unwanted elements and strangers in and around the capital and the towns.

**The Mir-bahr:** The provincial Mir-bahr, had to maintain the river and sea ports in good condition, to guard and supervise river communications. The Mir-Bahr was often required to assist the Subahdar and the Bakhshi by providing his fleet.

**The Waqianavis:** The Waqianavis used to keep the central authority informed on happenings in the province. Assisted by several secret reporters (Sawanihnavis), Waqianavis used to send intelligence reports to the center.

No account of the administrative history of medieval Bengal would be complete without reference to the salient features of the revenue system. Based on local tradition and the revenue system developed by the Sultani administration, the Mughals built up a comprehensive system. Since the land was the mainstay of the Mughal economy, as in past regimes, agrarian matters got the proper attention of rulers. Realizing that the prosperity of the country depended on the well-being of peasants, the rulers took great care in protecting the interests of cultivators and encouraged them to bring more land under cultivation.

### **Significance/importance of Mughal rule in Bengal:**

The period of imperial Mughal rule over Bengal witnessed the working of certain new forces which have completely transformed Bengali life and thought and whose influence is still operating in the province. Here are the several contributions that they have made:

**International Connections:** In the Sultanate, Bengal's cultural contact with the outside Muslim world was limited chiefly to Makkah and Madina. In the Mughal period, such connections, particularly with Arabia, Iran, and Turkey, increased largely.

**Educational significance:** The Mughal emperors were learned and liberal and possessed high moral principles. The high officers, like Wazir, Subahdar Diwan, etc., were also very learned and cultural people. They set examples of etiquette, tradition, and polished manners to be emulated by others. The Subahdars maintained libraries in their residences and got books on history, philosophy, science, and Belle's letters copied by calligraphists.

**Contributions in literature:** Contemporary Hindu literature composed by The Hindus was religion-based. However being influenced by Persian literature, poems dealing with love stories of men and women began to be the theme of Bengali literature. Persian literary works, particularly romantic stories, were translated into Bengali. Side by side, Bengali literature was also influenced by Hindi-Awadhi poetical works.

**Cultural significance:** Persians influenced the Bengali language and literature in a great way. Many Persian words entered the Bengali vocabulary. Many such words are still found not only in literature but also in the court circle and the day-to-day use of people.

**Employment opportunities:** Though the Muslims came to Bengal from the outside from the beginning, with the consolidation of Mughal authority, there was peace, and prospects of employment opportunities increased. So scholarly Muslims like the Ulemas, Sufis, Teachers, Poets, and Physicians came to Bengal in large numbers.

**Religious significance:** As the Mughals were liberal in religious matters, the non-Muslims could also practice their religion freely without interference. Besides, the lower-class non-Muslims accepted Islam either for mundane reasons, like gaining favors from the rulers or getting state services, or the teachings of Islam attracted them.

**Administrative significance:** The Mughal administrative and revenue system was well thought out and well planned. During this period, one administration, one law, one official language, a uniform official cadre, and uniform currency. Mughals established peace, good government, and discipline. They freed the people from the oppression of the pirates.

**Conclusion:** The discussion makes it clear that with the help of the above administration, Mughal Bengal has been described as the "Paradise of Nations", and its inhabitant's living standards and real wages were among the highest in the world. Worth 12% of the world's GDP, it alone accounted for 40% of Dutch imports outside the European continent. The eastern part of Bengal was globally prominent in industries such as textile manufacturing and shipbuilding, and it was a major exporter of silk and cotton textiles, steel, saltpeter, and agricultural and industrial produce in the world. Its capital Jahangir Nagar, today's modern Dhaka, had a population exceeding a million people. By the 18th century, Mughal Bengal emerged as a quasi-independent state, under the Nawabs of Bengal, and already observing the proto-industrialization, it made a direct significant contribution to the first Industrial Revolution (substantially textile manufacture during the Industrial Revolution).