

An Insight into the different types of Mughal Karkhanas

Mrs Boni Dutta

Assistant Professor, Dept. of History.

Alipurduar Mahila Mahavidyalaya,

Alipurduar, West Bengal.

Abstract-

The Mughals introduced several institutions and the most important was the Karkhanas (workshops or Store Houses). It is not only the workshop which bring different craftsmen together under one roof but also a place where the craftsmen could experiment with new ideas and technique and this ideas and technique brought a new revolution in the Mughal empire. The Mughal empire maintained their private palace workshops where skilled artisans manufacture articles of luxury not only for their own use but also for the presentation to the nobles as a matter of administrative practice or social etiquette.

Keywords- *Karkhana, Kan-i- Saman, Tasvir Khana, Daroga, Mustaufi, Tahvildar.*

The Mughal emperors maintained a factory of their own for the manufacture of articles of different kinds including cotton and silks which came to be known as Karkhanas. Karkhanas a manufacturing center during Mughal period which is generally required to met out ruler's demand for its household and army. Karkhanas generally emerged as an industry in Persia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Mughal emperors paid special attention in *Karkhanas* and set up it not only in the capital but also established it in the provincial headquarters as well as in the important industrial towns. Abul Fazl in *Ain-i-Akbari* also mentioned about the existence of large number of *Karkhanas* and its types and the interest of the Mughal emperors in the workshops can be traced from the following observation “ *His Majesty pays much attention in various stuffs.....skillful masters and workmen have settled in this country to teach people an improved system of manufacture*”. Francois Bernier a French Physician and traveler describes that large halls are seen in many places called *Karkhanas* or workshops for the artisans. The royal *Karkhanas* were found all over the country, big centers were found in Kashmir, Lahore, Agra, Ahmedabad, Fatehpur and Burhanpur. The workmanship of Kashmir was renowned.

The main function of the *Karkhanas* was to keep the palace and some branches of government supplied with the commodities which they needed. Within the wall of the fort was situated the office of the *Karkhanas* and almost all the Mughal emperors encouraged establishment of the royal *Karkhanas*.

While discussing about the administration of the *Karkhanas* the whole of household department was under the supervision of *Khan-i-Saman*, he is responsible for the successful working and the general supervision of the Karkhanas. Apart from *Khan-i-Saman* there were various other officers like, *Diwan-i-Buyutat*, *Mushrif-i-Kul*, *Darogha*, *Tahvildar* (Cashier and store Keeper), *Mustaufi* (Aiditor), *Darogha-i-Kacheri* (Office Superintendent) and *Nazir*. The officers work hard for the smooth functioning of the *Karkhanas* in the Mughal period.

Types of Karkhanas

The different types of *Karkhanas* which catered the needs of the emperors are-

Karkhanas of Paintings-

The Mughals maintained a large equipped *Karkhanas* of paintings. The Mughal art of Painting is well understood during the reign of Akbar. Abul Fazl describes “*Drawing the likeness of anything is called tasvir, His Majesty from his young age has shown a great liking for the art and gives encouragement for its development. Hence the art flourished and many painters have obtained great reputations.* One of the important projects of Akbar’s reign was the Hamza Nama in which the story is beautifully describes with paintings. According to Moti Chandra in his book, *Technique of Mughal Paintings* describes about the functioning of the *Karkhanas* where the painters assembled in a big hall under a head artist who entrusted each of them with the execution of that part of the picture with which was well acquainted. After a survey of Mughal miniatures almost 225 names of painters so far been noted. During the time of Jahangir, the *Tasvir Khana* developed and most of paintings vividly describes the courtly culture of the Mughal period.

Shawl Karkhanas-

Shawl *Karkhana* is one of the important workshops of Mughal era as under the Mughals it has been craze to have affine Shawl especially from Kashmir.in keeping interest in textiles Akbar showed great interest in the shawl manufacture of Kashmir.as shown in *Ain-i-Akbari*, Abul Fazl gives good account of Kashmiri shawls. The shawls use to be folded in four and wore them for a very long time. Emperor Akbar paid special attention for the manufacture of variety of shawls like *Zardozi* (embroidered with gold and sequins), *Kalabatun*(design brocaded with gold wire), *Qasidah*(pattern was embroidered not woven), *Qalghai*(it is either silk or gold wire or bore pine cone patterns), *Bandhnun* (tye-dyed pattern), *Chint* (floral patterns in the manner of calico prints), *Alcah* (white branded stuff), *Purzdar*(its type is obtained by joining together several strips).

Arms and Armory Karkhanas-

Arms and armory *Karkhanas* known as *Qur Khana* was a thriving industry for manufacturing swords, daggers, shields, armours, arrows, bows, spears and matchlocks. Here the weapons were manufactured tested and stored. Almost each and every Mughal emperor gives attention on the working of the *Qur Khana*. The swords which was made in these *Karkhanas* for the emperors contained gold and silver inlaid hilts. Couplets or names of the emperors were inscribed on the blade of the Swords.

Karkhanas of Carpet-

The Mughal Period is marked by beautiful and elegant carpets. The Mughal emperors put special emphasis in the production of carpets. The carpets display on beautiful variety of decorative designs. Akbar in his *Karkhanas* appointed experienced work men who produced many masterpieces. Skilled artisans are found specially in Agra, Fatehpur and Lahore. Beautiful varieties of decorative designs of woolen carpets are made in Kashmir, Fatehour and Jaunpur. Emperor Akbar introduced cotton carpets and set the manufacture units in Agra, Lahore and Fatehpur Sikri. *Ain-i-Akbari* mentioned silken carpets and brocades being extensively encouraged by the Emperor. Large varieties of *jajams*, *shatranjies* and silk mats are made in the *Karkhanas*. Beautiful and elegant carpets can be visible from the miniature paintings of the Mughal period almost all the emperors of the Mughal period encouraged *Karkhanas* for the carpets.

The Mughal empire witnessed remarkable economic progress and thus Mughal *Karkhanas* played an important development in the economic activity. One of the important institutions was *Karkhanas* which was maintained and developed by almost all the Mughal emperors.

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