

# The Chieftaincy of Kahalgaon and the Mughal Empire

Dr. Tahir H. Ansari

During Mughal period, we find the references to a large number of the territorial chiefs or the *zamindars*<sup>1</sup> in almost every part of the Northern and Eastern India. The zamindars played prominent roles in the political, social and economic sphere of the local and central administration of Hindustan. Generally the chiefs were known as *zamindars*, *marzabans*, *kalantarans* and *buzurg*<sup>2</sup> in the Mughal Persian contemporary or near contemporary sources but locally they were referred as *rajas*, *ranas*, *rais*, *raos*, *rawats*, etc. According to Irfan Habib, the zamindars are found in the every part of the Mughal empire.<sup>3</sup> However, the historians like W. H. Moreland and Parmatma Saran believed that the zamindars could not be found in all parts of the empire.<sup>4</sup> Nurul Hasan accepted the universal character of the

<sup>1</sup>A *zamindaris* the 'the holder of land' and 'the protector of the land'. The zamindar existed before the Muslim period and came to be called zamindars under the Muslim rule. A big zamindar is called a 'raja' who acquires land by purchase or usurpation is called a 'Ta'alluqdar'. The zamindar gets a 'nankar' by virtue of a royal *sanad*. A zamindar can sell his zamindari if he likes, otherwise no officer or government can seize his zamindari without any fault. The rights of the zamindar are *malikana*, *nankar*, *sir*, *chauth*, etc.

<sup>2</sup>AbulFazl in *Akbarnama*, ed. MaulawiAbdur Rahim, Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1877, has used the last three words.

<sup>3</sup>IrfanHabib, *Agrarian System of the Mughal India 1556-1707*, (New Delhi, Oxford University Press: 1999), pp. 169 -75.

<sup>4</sup> William Harrison Moreland, *Agrarian System of Moslem India*, (Cambridge, W. Heffer& Sons: 1929), pp. 191-4. Parmatma Saran, *Provincial Government of the Mughals 1526-1658*, (Allahabad, The Allahabad Law Press Kitabistan: 1941), p. 111.