

Security system: Transportation and travel personnel in Pre-modern Phase

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Abstract

The degree of security attained in the country generally can be inferred only from the observations of travelers: the information they give us is far from being complete, but it is sufficient to justify the statement that conditions varied vary greatly from place to place and also from time to time. The members of the caravan had to guard against both attack from without and betrayal from within. Although caravans were not completely immune from the depredation of bandits and robbers, their very size offered a measure of security. To ensure added protection of the caravan, armed sentries and guard were hired.

A general description of a caravan and its defense is given by Fr. Ippolito Desideri. He says that the Indians- Call *Cafila* a large body of people, armed all of them, who combined to travel together. And this is quite necessary, because one meets very often great troops and soldiers staying mostly in the mountains, who by profession are robbers and with whom whole of this vast empire swarms. The *Cafila* with which I had started consisted of 2000 persons, or more, a great numbers of them soldiers on horseback and a great part of foot soldiers. Thus, united in the morning before day break, we began marching in good order like an army with trumpets, drums, standard officers, baggage carts, camels etc. We went along with this style up to a convenient hour and finally encamped in some spacious place and always near a lake or ditch, there in the open men, men spent the night resting, but always sentries on the watch. For many days the road was good, but many days too it was rough and difficult all the time with excessive heat, and chiefly every day by hot wind which made travelling most pain full, even for animals themselves. The danger we encountered were various sorts.

The Mughals were aware of the hazards of travel and ordered strong measures to maintain peace and security. William Finch (1608-11) found many guards and police post whose purpose was to prevent robbery, and attend to the welfare of the travelers.¹ The robberies and attack on caravans often took place indicates that guards sometimes failed in their task, like their modern counterparts.