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# UNIT 1 POLITICAL FORMATIONS IN CENTRAL AND WEST ASIA

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- 1.3 The Antecedents of Uzbeks and the Safavis
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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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The study of this unit would enable you to:

- understand the appearance of the Mughals on Indian borders and to learn about their origin and antecedents,
- demarcate the geographical boundary of the two powerful neighbouring states of the Mughal Empire,
- acquaint yourself with the historical perspective of the establishment of the Uzbek and Safavi Empires,
- analyse the factors which influenced and shaped the internal and external decisions and policies of the Mughals at earlier stages.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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The conquest of India by the Mughals was a direct consequence of the political reshuffling and dynastic changes which took place on its north-western frontier at the turn of the 15th century. These in turn led to the formation of two new states i.e., Turan (Transoxiana in Central Asia) under the Uzbeks and Iran (Persia) under the Safavi rulers.

A study of the political formations in West and Central Asia in the first decade of the sixteenth century is important due to the geographical proximity and the age-old close cultural and commercial contacts existing between these regions and India. The fugitive Uzbek princes of Dasht-i-Qipchaq, led by Shaibani Khan, wrested Central Asia from the Timurids, exterminating the dynasty founded by Timur. In fact, this led Babur (one of the very few Timurid survivors) to turn towards India.

The Mughals, having originated from and ruled over Central Asia for over thirteen decades (1370-1505) naturally brought with them a well-tryed administrative system and a bequest in the form of Turco-Mongol terminology, institutions (both political

and economic) and practices (see Block 4) which had a bearing on the Mughal rule in India. The history of Mughal India can be better understood if we have some idea of its neighbouring regions rather than studying it in isolation. Such a study, therefore, assists us in understanding the historical perspective, socio-economic background and the ethos of the Mughal rulers in India. The twin states of Central Asia and Persia rose and fell almost simultaneously with that of the Mughals. The political and cultural relations at all levels increased during the sixteenth century between these states. The common cultural heritage through the ages was enriched further due to a continuous exchange of ideas and movement of men and commodities.

It is worth mentioning here that the definition of West and Central Asia is a polemic issue as its frontiers fluctuated more with the interpretations than with its geographical or territorial extent. It is safer to call the region with which we are concerned here by a generally accepted term, i.e., "the inner Asia". The regions described as West and Central Asia, therefore, refer in this context to the two "states" known as Turan and Iran. These two states which developed as separate political and cultural entities in the sixteenth century had often formed part (as a province) of a large empire under one central authority (such as the Umayyads, Abbasids, Mongols and the Timurids). The two states, therefore, carried elements of common heritage in many of their administrative and organizational features. The religio-political and socio-economic transformations arising out of the changing regimes added their own new distinctive features without obliterating their deep-rooted and age-old similarities, traditions and common heritage. Although both these states had tribal bases in the 16th century, their cultural and racial distinctions were retained (and even heightened due to sectarian differences) until their disintegration. This unit takes into account the various aspects related to Turan and Iran.

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## 1.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DELIMITATION OF TURAN AND IRAN

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The inner Asian region called Turan acquired the name Mawaraunnahr (literally meaning between the two rivers) from its Arab conquerors as the region was situated between the two rivers Syr and Amu. The above region was surrounded by Aral sea, river Syr and Turkestan in the North; Iran, river Amu and Afghanistan in the South; Tienshan and Hindukush mountains in the East up to the Karokorum deserts, and the Caspian sea in the West with its diverse geographical features (arid and semi-arid lands, steppes, deserts, mountains, valleys and oases). Thus, the region was a checker-board of varied patterns of life-style ranging from nomadism, pastoralism to a settled mode of living. This region is also a land of inland drainage with enclosed basins away from the sea and is isolated from Atlantic and Pacific circulations. Apart from agriculture, cattle breeding was a popular profession. The region was famous for its horses which were exported in large numbers to India. Samarqandi paper, and fruits (both fresh and dry) were other items of export. The eastern ridges of Elburz mountains separated Iranian plateau from Turkestan (Iran).

In terms of physical geography, Iran or Persia consists of extensive mountain ranges extending from Asia Minor and Caucasus to the plains of Punjab called Iranian Plateau. A chain of mountains surrounds the sandy saline deserts of the central plateau thus converting it into a closed basin.

Iran had four major divisions, namely:

the Zagros system comprising Khuzistan and small outer plains,  
 the northern highlands of Iran (i.e., Elburz and Talish system) and the Caspian plain,  
 eastern and south-eastern upland rim, and  
 the interior region.

In terms of economic life, considerable variation is noticed such as pastoralism (mainly in the higher regions), agricultural settlements (in low lying areas) and nomadism (towards the West among Kurdish shepherds) all existing simultaneously. The north-western section of Zagros connected ancient east-west trade routes, and

### 1.3 THE ANTECEDENTS OF UZBEGS AND THE SAFAVIS

The Uzbegs of Turan or Transoxiana were the descendants of Chingiz's eldest son, Juji. They derived their name from Uzbeg Khan (1312-40) of the Golden Horde and hailed from Jiji's appanage—the Dāsht-i-Qipchaq. The Uzbegs spoke Chaghatai Turkish and followed Turco-Mongol traditions. They were orthodox Sunni and followed the Hanafite Law. Numerous Turco-Mongol tribes such as the Naiman, Qushji, Durman, Qunghrat and others supported the Uzbeg state. The hostile tribes which eroded their power through constant invasions were the Mongols, Qazaqs and Qirghiz.

#### The Safavis

The Safavis were of the native Iranian stock (from Kurdistan), professed Shii'sm and followed Perso-Islamic traditions of the land they were called upon to govern. They spoke Azari Turkish and also Persian. Being of a humble *sufi* origin, they later constructed an impressive genealogy. The mainstay of the Safavi power was the constellation of the Turcoman tribes though the Iranian element was equally strong in the administrative bureaucracy. To the two groups were added the Georgians and Circassians later on. The four elements (particularly the Turcoman groups) were as much a source of strength in external political relations as they were a cause of perpetual intrigues internally.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Describe the significance of the study of Central Asian history in relation to the Mughals.

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- 2) Discuss the antecedents of the Uzbegs and the Safavis.

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- 3) Give a geographical description of Turan and Iran.

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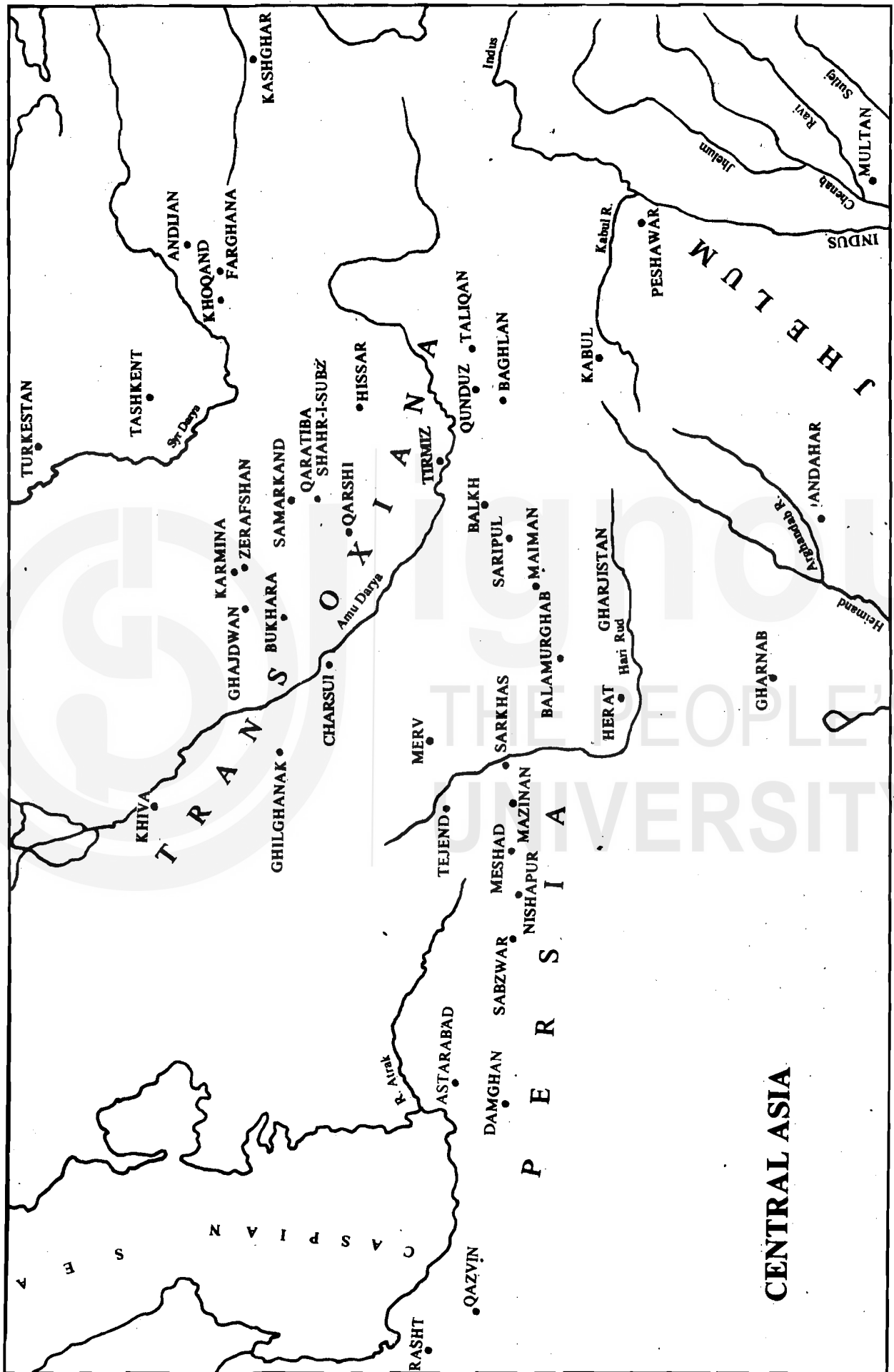
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## 1.4 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EVE OF THE POLITICAL FORMATIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA

During the civil wars (which were a common occurrence in the Timurid Transoxiana), the Timurid princes of Transoxiana (like Abu Said, Muhammad Jugi, Sultan Husain Baiqra and Manuchihr Mirza) often approached the Uzbek ruler Abul Khair of Dast-i-Qipchaq for assistance against their respective rivals. The latter successfully intervened in Timurid politics and assisted Abu Said (1451), Muhammad Jugi (1455) and others to regain the throne. After the disintegration of the Empire of Abulkhair (1428-68) in the Dasht, his grandson Shaibani took shelter with the Timurids of Central Asia. At this juncture, there were five states in Transoxiana. The three sons of Sultan Abu Said (1451-69) namely, Sultan Mahmud Mirza, Sultan Ahmad Mirza (1469-94) and Umar Shaikh Mirza ruled over the three states comprising Samarqand and Bukhara, Tirmiz, Hisar, Qunduz and Badakhshan, and Farghana and its vicinity respectively. The fourth Timurid state of Balkh and Khurasan was held by Sultan Husain Baiqra. Again, there was the mongol Khanate of Tashkand and Moghulistan where the mongol rulers Yunus Khan (1462-87) and his two sons, Mahmud Khan and Ahmad Khan, reigned. Yunus Khan's three daughters were married to the three above mentioned sons of Abu Said. The mutual rivalries and jealousies existing among the five states often resulted in bitter wars. In one such conflict when Sultan Ahmad was involved in the battle of Syr against his rival Sultan Mahmud, the former hired Shaibani along with his retinue hoping that he could be a good match to the Mongols in the art of fighting. Although Shaibani appeared in this battle as an ally of Sultan Ahmad Mirza, he served the cause of Mahmud Khan as secret negotiations had already taken place. This led to an unexpected victory for Mahmud Khan. For this timely assistance, Shaibani received the reward in the form of governorship of Otrar—a town in Khwarazmia—which provided him with the long awaited and much desired base in Transoxiana. Thereafter, Shaibani took full advantage of the prevailing anarchy in the various remaining Khanates, and gradually eliminated them with his political acumen and stratagem.

## 1.5 ESTABLISHMENT OF UZBEG POWER IN TRANSOXIANA

After the death of Umar Shaikh and Sultan Ahmad Mirza, Sultan Mahmud Mirza was also assassinated. His two sons, Sultan Ali and Baisundhur Mirza, now became rivals for the throne of Samarqand and Hisar. During the anarchy which prevailed in the Timurid empire, the Tarkhan nobles became powerful. They not only usurped the entire revenue but made opportunistic alliances and used one prince as a counterpoise against the other. Taking advantage, Shaibani wrested Bukhara from its Timurid governor Baqar Tarkhan in 1499, and then besieged Samarqand. Since the queen mother Zuhra Begi was an Uzbek lady, she promised to surrender Samarqand if Shaibani gave the governorship of the choicest province to her son, Sultan Ali. Thus, Shaibani occupied Samarqand in 1500 without a war though Sultan Ali passed away soon after. The Uzbeks, were, however, soon overthrown as the Samarqandis led by Khwaja Abul Mukarram invited Babur. In the battle of Saripul (1501), Babur was defeated and, since no assistance was forthcoming, he left Samarqand and went to his uncle Mahmud Khan. In early 1503 Shaibani inflicted a crushing defeat upon the joint forces of Babur and his maternal uncles Mahmud and Ahmad Khan, both of whom were made captives. Babur's noble Tambal invited Shaibani to occupy Farghana. Shaibani conquered Farghana and Qunduz (1504) and overran Balkh, Memna and Faryab in 1505. Although Shaibani released the Mongol Khans, Mahmud and Ahmad (the latter died shortly afterwards) due to their past kindness, he ultimately put Mahmud Khan and his five children to death (1508) as their existence would have been a danger to his Empire.

A galaxy of Timurid princes including Babur, Badiuzzaman and Muzaffar Hussain led by Sultan Hussain Baiqra planned to face the Uzbeks unitedly. Before the joint

venture could materialise, Sultan Hussain died in 1506. Herat was plunged into a war of succession. The chaos persisted even after the dual rule of Badiuzzaman and Muzaffar Hussain was established. The conquest of the last Timurid principality was, therefore, a foregone conclusion. Soon after, Shaibani undertook a campaign against the Qazaqs of Moghulistan in 1508. Now the entire Transoxiana lay at the feet of Shaibani. The dynasty which was established by Shaibani came to be known as the Shaibanid. The immediate reasons for this transfer of power from the Timurids to the Uzbegs were:

- the personal incompetence of the later Timurid Rulers;
- their mutual rivalry;
- the absence of any settled rule for succession, and
- the lack of strong administration.

### 1.5.1 The Tripartite Conflict of the Uzbegs, Persians and Timurids

The conquest of Khurasan had brought the border of Shaibanid empire closer to the Safavi one. Since, Shaibani was ambitious, he demanded allegiance from the Shah which eventually led to a war in 1510, in which Shaibani was defeated and killed. Shah Ismail not only occupied Khurasan but also assisted Babur thereafter to reoccupy Transoxiana from the Uzbegs. Babur received a very warm welcome from the Samarqandis, but the latter disapproved his association with 'heretic' Shia' Shah Ismail. The subsequent reprisal perpetrated upon the subjects by Babur's greedy followers further provoked the Central Asians to long for the Uzbek rule.

### 1.5.2 Recovery and Resurgence of the Uzbek Power

After their expulsion from Central Asia (1510-11), the Uzbegs had clustered in Turkestan having no courage to face the combined forces of Babur and the Shah. The only aspiring Uzbek prince was Ubaidullah, a nephew of Shaibani. Though his resources were limited, he conquered Transoxiana after defeating Babur. Thereafter, the Uzbegs gradually recovered Bukhara, Samarqand and other territories in 1512-1513.

In 1514, the Ottoman Sultan Salim (1512-20) invited Ubaidullah to join him against Ismail. Although Ubaidullah failed to oblige Salim, the latter managed to inflict a crushing defeat upon the Shah through strategic manoeuvres which were later on applied by Babur in his battle of Panipat in 1526. The most important rulers of the Shaibanid Empire were Ubaidullah and Abdullah Khan—the latter being a contemporary of Akbar. Both Ubaidullah and Abdullah Khan (whose span of rulership was from 1513-1540 and 1565-1598 respectively) waged several wars against Persia. (See Unit 7)

**The Astrakhanids:** After the death of Abdullah Khan (1598) and the assassination of his only son and successor Abdul Momin six months later, the dynasty came to be known as Astarakhanids. The Uzbek Empire lasted until the Russian conquest. The Empire disintegrated almost at the same time when other Asian states collapsed in the face of colonialism.

### 1.5.3 The Uzbek Empire

The revenue collections of the Uzbek Transoxiana depended mainly upon booty, city taxes and commercial resources. With artificial irrigation and limited agriculture, even a high tax on land (amounting to more than a half) fetched a negligible amount. Situated on the crossroads of caravans (en route the Silk Road), Transoxiana continued to be in a flourishing state in early middle ages. Due to diversion of trade routes under certain Mongol Khans and after the discovery of the sea-route to Asia from Europe in 1498, a decline in trade is noticed by the travellers and chroniclers. The administrative structure of the Timurids underwent a slight change under the Uzbegs as the Turco-Mongol traditions were further strengthened. The socio-religious atmosphere was now characterised by a wave of fanaticism and sectarian bigotry. At the same time, the domination of the Naqshbandi saints over the political arena was a new phenomenon introduced under the Uzbegs.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) Briefly describe the main stages in the conquest of Transoxiana by the Uzbegs.

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2) Discuss the reasons for the downfall of the Timurids.

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3) Give a short account of the tripartite relations of the Uzbegs, Persians and the Timurids.

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**1.6 ORIGIN OF THE SAFAVIS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The Safavi Empire sprang up almost in the same geographical area where the Ilkhanid state had once flourished. Hulaku's Empire re-emerged in a diminutive form (the Jalayrid Empire)—extending over Mesopotamia, Azerbaijan and later on covering the region of Shirvan also. The remaining portions of the Ilkhanid territory were lost to the two Turcoman confederations, namely Aq Quyunlu (the white sheep) and Qara Quyunlu (the black sheep). Aq Quyunlu extended their sway over Diyar-i Bakr with their centre at Amid. Qara Quyunlus had their centre at Arjish (on the eastern shore of lake Van) spreading in the north to Erze Rum and in the south to Mosul. The heterogenous population of the two regions comprised the Arabs, Armenians, Kurds and others.

**1.6.1 The Aq Quyunlus and Qara Quyunlus**

Under the enterprising Jahanshah, Qara Quyunlu dynasty expanded from Van to the deserts between Persia and Khurasan and from the Caspian sea to the Persian Gulf. They had become independent of the Timurids. Jahanshah was widely known as a progenitor of the Shias while the Aq Quyunlus were Sunnis. The most famous Aq Quyunlu ruler was Uzan Hasan (1453-78) who defeated Jahanshah and established his suzerainty almost over the entire Persia. Hence, the borders of his Empire came closer to that of the Timurids. The Ottoman ruler Muhammad II always looked upon him as a mighty princeling enjoying the resources of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Azerbaijan and Persia. However, Uzun Hasan was defeated by the Ottomans (in 1473) whose artillery was superior to the former's army. At the time of Uzun Hasan's death (in 1478), his Turcoman Empire extended from upper reaches of Euphrates to the Great Salt Desert and the province of Kirman in South Persia, and from

## Transcaucasia to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf.

Uzun Hasan's sister Khadija Begam was married to a very enterprising and influential **shaikh**, named Junaid (1447-60). He was the leader of the most popular **sufi** order called the Safaviya with its Centre at Aradabil. Shaikh Junaid was a successor of Shaikh Safiuddin Ishaq (1252-1334), a disciple and son-in-law of Shaikh Zahid (1218-1301). Safiuddin Ishaq (from whom the Safavi dynasty derived its name) not only inherited the **sufi** order of Shaikh Zahid but also founded his own order as Safaviya in Ardabil in 1301. Due to their popularity, Shaikh Safiuddin and his successors always aroused the jealousy of the Qara Quyunlu Sultans.

Shaikh Junaid was the first spiritual guide of the Safaviya order. He collected an army of 10,000 to fight the Qara Quyunlu ruler. He imparted militancy to the order replacing the **sufis** by the **ghazis** (warriors of faith). After his death in 1455, his son and successor Haider married the daughter of his maternal uncle Amir Hasan Beg who put Jahanshah to death and became the ruler of Azerbaijan and the two Iraqs. Out of this union, three sons were born, namely, Sultan Ali, Ibrahim and Ismail. The youngest Ismail (b. 1487) became founder of the Safavi Empire. Sultan Haider had prepared a scarlet cap of twelve gores (with reference to the twelve Imams), and ordered all his followers to make their headgear after this fashion, hence came the title Qizilbash (redheads).

Haider marched against the tribal elements of Cherkas and Daghestan. On the way, he lost his life in a battle with the forces of the Shirvan ruler Farrukh Yassar, the son-in-law of Yaqub Mirza in 1488. Although Yaqub spared the life of the three sons of Haider for the sake of his own sister Halima Begi Agha, he imprisoned them in the fort of Istakhara. When a civil war broke out between the deceased Yaqub Mirza's sons Baisunghar and Rustam Mirza, the latter sought help from Sultan Ali. As soon as Rustam Mirza achieved success, he put Sultan Ali to death out of jealousy. Sultan Ali had already sensed the imminent danger and had nominated Ismail as his successor (1494). Ismail had to face much difficulty until the death of Rustam Mirza in July 1497 after which Aradabil was engulfed in a civil war. Ismail seized this opportunity and sent his men to collect his scattered followers. Reinforced by the military assistance received from Qaracha Illiyas and strengthened by 7000 of his followers from Turcoman tribes, he subdued Georgia and acquired much booty in 1500. At the age of fourteen, he had an encounter with Farrukh Yassar of Shirvan at Gulistan fort and having killed the ruler invaded Baku. It was in the year 1501 that Ismail won a victory over Aq Quyunlu, entered the Turcoman capital at Tabriz and ascended the throne with the title Shah.

### 1.6.2 The Turcomans and the Safavis

The power of Safavis (the new dynasty which lasted in Persia till 1736), was based on the support given by the Turcoman tribes, namely Shamlu, Rumlu, Takkalu, Zulqadar, Afshar, Qachar, Ustajlu and Warsaq. The Turcoman adherents of Aradabil order were the basis of this new ruling class though the Safavids themselves were not pure Turcomans. The Turcomans were attracted towards the Persian Shah owing to religious affinity and also for social and political reasons. The Turcoman tribes of Asia Minor or Central Asia could not integrate themselves with the Ottomans or the Uzbek Empire due to their racial and religious differences. On the other hand the Ottoman or the Uzbek rule also had no better prospects to offer them. The Turcomans enjoyed an extraordinary position in the Persian Empire. Initially, almost all the important civil, military and administrative posts were held by them. The traditions of governance and administration were borrowed by the Safavis from the rulers of Tabriz. The tribal loyalties of these Turcomans sustained Shah Ismail well. The Shah not only carried the traditions of the god-king (combining in himself the spiritual and temporal powers) but also legitimised his rule in the name of his relationship with his grandfather Uzun Hasan. Shah Ismail's kinship with Aq Quyunlu was important for him. Undoubtedly, the Qara Quyunlu and Aq Quyunlu had previously created certain pre-conditions for the establishment of a new dynasty with older political and cultural traditions of Persia.

### 1.6.3 Shiism and the Safavis

The new dynasty had created a somewhat changed military and political structure with the Shia creed as state religion and Iranicisation of Persian Islam — sprouting



into a new cultural entity, i.e., the evolution of a 'Persian People'. The Safavi state originated from a religious-cum-political nucleus. Thus, the intertwining of religion and politics which is noticed at the outset, seems to match the sectarian attitude of the Sunni Ottoman and the Uzbek states. Shah Ismail received full support from Kashan and Qum which were mainly inhabited by the Shias. Elsewhere (as in the Sunni Baghdad or Herat), the population resisted his advance and he faced reprisals.

## 1.7 THE SAFAVIS AND THE UZBEG—OTTOMAN CONFRONTATION

The rising power of the Shia 'Safavis' (new contenders of supremacy in the Muslim world) checked the Ottomans from incorporating Persia into their domain. In fact, the Perso-Uzbek and Perso-Ottoman wars were a continuous feature of the sixteenth century.

Although Shah Ismail (1502-1524) did not fight any war after his debacle at Chaldiran in 1514 at the hands of the Ottoman ruler Salim (1512-1520), his son and successor Shah Tahmasp (1524-76) had to face both the Uzbeks and the Ottomans almost incessantly. The five major invasions of the Uzbeks on Khurasan (1524-38) and four full-scale Ottoman invasions on Azerbaijan (1534-35, 1548, 1553) failed to overwhelm Shah Tahmasp, though he signed a peace at Amasya (29 May 1555) with the Ottomans. Besides these external dangers there also emerged some internal problems. For example, the two different racial and linguistic groups of the Turcomans and Iranians (each of whom had different origins, culture, and customs) were joined by new constituents—the Georgians and the Circassians. This led to increased court intrigues.

While the Safavis had pragmatic relations with the Mughals of India (see Unit 7), they also maintained good relations, though occasionally, with the Russians and the Portuguese.

Apart from Shah Tahmasp, Shah Abbas I (1588-1629, whose reign is said to be the zenith of the Safavi power) Shah Abbas II (1642-66) and Shah Safi were other important Safavi rulers. With Shah Abbas I, the Safavi state gradually developed from its theocratic base and military structure into a full-bloomed Empire of the Orient. He introduced many administrative and military reforms. A new group of loyalists (the Ghulams) was created who occupied many new posts. The army was organised on the pattern suggested by Robert Sherley who was appointed as 'Master General against the Turks'. A centrally paid strong army was organised, and a regiment of artillery with 500 guns was established.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Briefly discuss the achievements of Shah Abbas I.

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- 2) Write a few lines on the Qara Qyunlu and Aq Qyunlu.

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3) Discuss the early history of the Safavis.

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4) Highlight the importance of the Turcomans in the Safavi Empire.

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## 1.8 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have tried to trace the antecedents and origin of the Mughals. A geographical sketch of the two powerful neighbouring states of India—namely—Transoxiana and Iran in Central Asia—has been provided. The ethnic and political antecedents of the Uzbek and Safavi empires of Transoxiana and Iran respectively have been dealt with. A study of the two empires in its historical perspective is also given. The Mughals originated from Central Asia and ruled over this region for three decades. Therefore the historical perspective, socio-economic-political background and ethos of Mughal rule in India can only be understood against the backdrop of Central Asian history.

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## 1.9 KEY WORDS

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- Appanage** : something that is derived as a matter of right on account of one's lineage, position, etc.
- Dyarchy** : dual government.
- Gore** : triangular or wedge-shaped pieces of cloth.
- Khanate** : it denotes the office and jurisdiction of the Khan who was the political and administrative head over a particular territory.
- Nomadism** : a mode of living practised by tribes who do not lead a settled life and wander from place to place in search of livelihood.
- Ottomans** : this is an anglicised corruption of the Arabic Usman. The Ottomans were Turks whose power was rising rapidly in the 15th century. They completed the conquest of Asia Minor after taking Constantinople in 1453.
- Pastoralism** : a mode of living practised by tribes in which animal rearing was an important aspect. This pattern led to nomadism.
- Shia** : a sect of Muslims which upholds the rights of the members of Prophet Muhammad's direct descendants to the religious and political leadership of the Muslim community. The name is derived from **Shiat Ali**, the Arabic term for the party of Hazrat Ali who was the cousin of Prophet Muhammad and husband of Prophet's daughter Fatima.
- Sunni** : a sect of Muslims disagreeing with the claims of the Shias. Sunni is from the Arabic **sunnat**, that is, the sayings and deeds

**Turcoman Groups :** tribes of Asia Minor and Central Asia.

## 1.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 1.1. Your answer should include the following points:
  - i) the Mughal conquerors originated from and ruled over Central Asia;
  - ii) this had an important bearing on Mughal rule in India;
  - iii) therefore, it is relevant to study the Central Asian relations, etc.
- 2) See Section 1.3. Your answer should include the following points:
  - i) the Uzbegs of Turan were the descendants of Chingiz's eldest son;
  - ii) they derived their names from Uzbeg Khan, etc.
- 3) See Section 1.2. Your answer should include the following points:
  - i) the inner Asian region called Turan acquired the name Transoxiana from its Arab conquerors as the region was situated between the two rivers, namely, Syr and Amu;
  - ii) Iran consists of extensive mountain ranges extending from Asia and Caucasus to the plains of Punjab called Iranian plateau, etc.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:  
Anarchy in the Timurid empire enabled Uzbegs to wrest Bukhara and Samarqand from Timurids; joint forces of Babur and his maternal uncles defeated by Uzbegs and Farghana, Qunduz, Balkh, Memna and Faryab were taken; Herat occupied by the Uzbegs due to chaos prevailing there, etc (see Section 1.4 and 1.5).
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:  
Personal incompetence of the later Timurid rulers; mutual rivalry, etc. (see Section 1.5).
- 3) Your answer should include the following points:  
Conquest of Khurasan brought the borders of the Uzbegs close to the Safavi Persia; the Uzbegs tried to assert themselves as the supreme power in the region but were subdued by the Persians, etc. (see Sub-section 1.5.1).

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Your answer should including the following points:  
Aq Quyunlu (the white sheep) and Qara Quyunlu (the black sheep) were Turcoman confederations; Aq Quyunlu had their centre at Amid while Qara Quyunlu had their Centre at Arjish, etc. (see Sub-section 1.6.1).
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:  
The famous Aq Quyunlu leader Uzun Hassan's sister was married to a Shaikh namely Junaid, the leader of a **sufi** order called Safaviya with its centre at Aradabil; his son and successor Haider put the Qara Quyunlu ruler to death and became the ruler of Azerbaijan; his youngest son Ismail founded the Safavi empire, etc. (see Section 1.6 and Sub-section 1.6.1).
- 3) Your answer should include the following points:  
The Turcoman tribes were the mainstay of the Safavi empire; they formed the basis of the new ruling class, etc. (see Sub-section 1.6.2).
- 4) Your answer should include the following points:  
In Shah Abdas I's time the Safavi state developed into an empire; he introduced many administrative and military reforms, etc. (see Section 1.7).

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## UNIT 2 POLITY AND ECONOMY IN NORTH INDIA

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### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The Lodi Empire
  - 2.2.1 Sikandar Lodi
  - 2.2.2 Ibrahim Lodi
- 2.3 Establishment of the Mughal Power
- 2.4 The Second Afghan Empire
- 2.5 Administrative Structure
  - 2.5.1 Nature of Kingship
  - 2.5.2 General Administration
- 2.6 Economy
  - 2.6.1 Agrarian Structure
  - 2.6.2 Iqta System
  - 2.6.3 Urbanisation
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Key Words
- 2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit discusses the polity and economy in North India during the 16th century. After going through this Unit you would be able to understand and analyse the:

- nature of political authority exercised by Sikandar Lodi,
- problems faced by Ibrahim Lodi,
- early difficulties of Babur in establishing Mughal rule,
- circumstances in which Humayun was defeated by Sher Shah, and
- administrative set up under the Lodi Sultans as well as the process of urbanisation.

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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The first half of the 16th century in North India was a period of political turmoil and instability. This period witnessed frequent changes of ruling dynasties and emergence of diverse ruling groups. The most significant event was the Mughal conquest of India. This influenced in a major way the Indian polity, economy and society of coming 200 years. In this Unit we focus our attention mainly on the first half of the 16th century. Our aim here is to familiarise you with the political and economic background in which the powerful Mughal Empire established itself in India.

At first we discuss the political developments during this period. Our discussion starts with the Lodi dynasty of the Afghans. After that we see how the Mughals defeated the Afghans and established their own political power. Next, we discuss the overthrow of the Mughals by the Afghans. The Unit ends with the account of the re-establishment of Mughal power under Humayun. In the sphere of economy, the major developments taking place during this period under the Afghans have been discussed. We hope this Unit will also help you in understanding the subsequent Mughal polity and economy of this period. Let us start with the Lodi empire.

## 2.2 THE LODI EMPIRE

By the end of 15th century Bahlul Lodi firmly established the Lodi dynasty at Delhi. He succeeded in bringing large area of North India under his control. After his death, his son Sikandar Lodi succeeded him to the throne.

### 2.2.1 Sikandar Lodi

In the sixteenth century the Lodi Empire, under Sultan Sikandar Lodi, in North India reached its zenith. In 1496, Sultan Husain Sharqi, the ex-ruler of Jaunpur was driven away from south Bihar and the Rajput chieftains in alliance with him were either forced into submission, or uprooted. Their **zamindaris** were brought under the control of the Sultan or reduced to the status of vassal principalities. Likewise, the power of those Afghan and non-Afghan nobles, reluctant to acquiesce to the Sultan's authority, was eliminated in the area around Delhi. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, the annexation of Dholpur paved the way for the expansion of the Afghan rule in the regions of Rajputana and Malwa. The forts of Narwar and Chanderi were annexed while the Khanzada of Nagaur acknowledged the suzerainty of the Lodi Sultan in 1510-11. In short, the whole of North India, from Punjab in the north-west to Saran and Champaran in north Bihar in the east, and Chanderi to the south of Delhi were brought under the Lodi rule.

### 2.2.2 Ibrahim Lodi

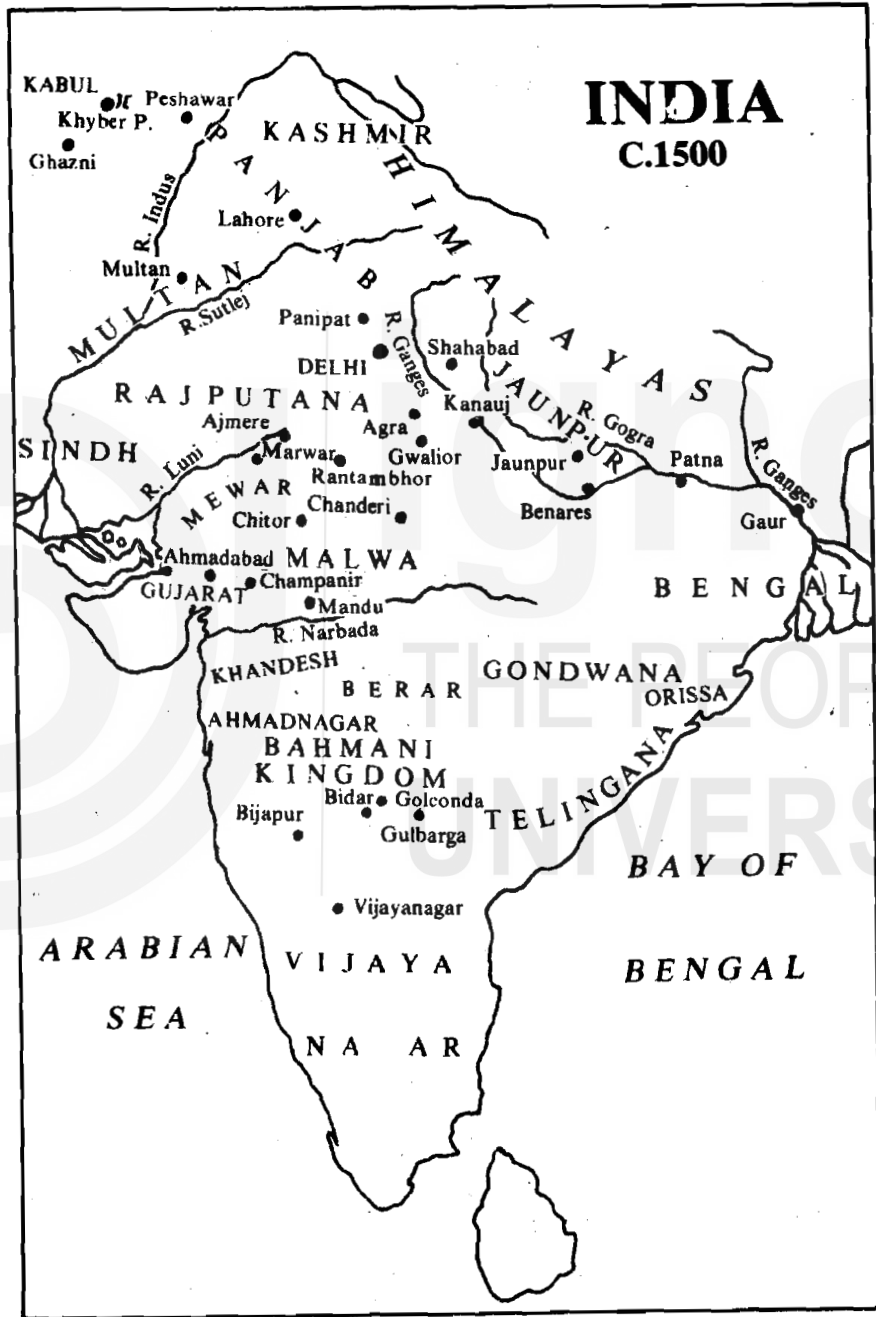
Unlike his father, Sultan Ibrahim Lodi (1517-1526) had to face the hostility of the Afghan nobility soon after his accession to the throne in 1517. He found himself surrounded by powerful nobles bent upon weakening the centre to gain an upper hand for themselves. His father had to fight against his brothers and relatives and was supported by the nobles who wanted to replace the princes in the resourceful provinces. Upon the death of Sultan Sikandar, the nobles decided to divide the Empire between Sultan Ibrahim Lodi and his younger brother Prince Jalal Khan Lodi, the governor of Kalpi.

Sultan Ibrahim was forced by them to accept the division which naturally weakened the centre. Some time later, some of the senior nobles, like Khan Khanan Nuhani, who came from their provinces to do obeisance to the new Sultan, criticised the supporters of division, calling their action detrimental to the Empire. They also persuaded the Sultan to rescind the agreement. On their advice, Sultan Ibrahim sent high nobles to Prince Jalal Khan. Their mission was to persuade him to withdraw his claim and acknowledge his elder brother as the Sultan. The efforts went in vain and this created a succession crisis.

At this juncture Sultan Ibrahim appeared more powerful than his rival brother. Hence, the old nobles rallied round him. However, there were few exceptions like 'Azam Humayun Sarwani, the governor of Kara and his son Fath Khan Sarwani. They stood by Jalal Khan but for some time only. When Sultan Ibrahim marched in person, even these two deserted Jalal Khan and joined the Sultan.

The Sultan deputed Azam Humayun Sarwani against Raja Bikramajit of Gwalior. This was done so because Prince Jalal Khan had taken shelter there. From Gwalior, Jalal Khan fled towards Malwa but was captured by the Gonds and sent as prisoner to the Sultan in Agra. However, his escape from Gwalior made the Sultan suspicious of the loyalty of the old nobles to him. Azam Humayun was recalled and thrown into prison. The Raja of Gwalior surrendered to the nobles and agreed to join the service of the Sultan. He was given the territory of Shamsabad (Farrukhabad district) in **iqta**. It was about this time that the celebrated **wazir** Mian Bhua also lost royal confidence and was put under arrest. The imprisonment of the old nobles sparked off wide-spread rebellion in the eastern region.

The Sultan raised his favourites to key positions at the court and sent others to the provinces as governors. As a result, the old nobles became apprehensive of their future and began to build up their power in the provinces. Darya Khan Nuhani, a powerful governor of Bihar, became a rallying point for the dissatisfied nobles in the east. About the same time, Babur occupied the **sarkar** of Bhera and Daulat Khan Lodi, the supreme governor of the trans-Sultej Punjab, failed to liberate it. When



summoned to the court, Daulat Khan did not come and revolted against the Sultan in Lahore. He also invited the uncle of Sultan Ibrahim, 'Alam Khan Lodi (son of Bahlul Lodi), and declared him as the new Sultan under the title of Sultan Alauddin. Both formed an alliance with Babur, the ruler of Kabul, against Sultan Ibrahim. Rana Sangram Singh and Babur also seems to have reached to an understanding against Ibrahim Lodi (for further details see Unit 7).

## 2.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MUGHAL POWER

Babur, who had invaded with some success the border areas of the north-west frontier, launched a well planned attack with the help of his political allies in India.

In 1526, Babur and his Indian allies fought against Sultan Ibrahim at Panipat. The artillery used by Babur for the first time in north India helped him achieve easy victory. Ibrahim Lodi was killed in the battle and the road to Delhi and Agra was cleared for Babur.

When Babur supplanted the Lodi rule by his own his Indian allies were disappointed. The dissatisfied Afghan and non-Afghan nobles accepted Prince Mahmud Lodi as their Sultan and decided to carry an armed struggle against the Mughals. The fifteen years of combined rule of Babur and Humayun rule is to be treated as an interregnum between the fall of the Lodis and the foundation of Sher Shah Sur's Empire.

Babur (d. 1530) and Humayun adopted the same state system in India that they found existing under the Lodi Sultans. For example, the policy they followed towards the **zamindars** was the age-old tradition set by the Delhi Sultans. Babur mentions that the **rais** and **rajas** were found on all sides and quarters of Hindustan, obedient as well as disobedient to the Muslim ruler. In fact, he was satisfied when the **rajas** paid nominal allegiance to him as they did in the past. The **Baburnama** clearly shows that Babur assigned the charge of territories to the nobles, granting them the right to collect land revenue and carry on the government there on his behalf as was the prevalent system. The **shiqqdars** were posted in the **parganas** under **khalisa**. In short, Babur or Humayun do not seem to have made any important change in the political system in North India.

The Afghan and non-Afghan nobles who fought against Babur and Humayun under the nominal leadership of Sultan Mahmud Lodi, failed to achieve success. This was primarily due to rivalry and dissensions among themselves. Their defeat in 1531 by Humayun finally sealed the fate of the old Afghan nobility. Thereafter, the leadership of the anti-Mughal Afghans was taken over by Sher Khan Sur who, by now, had established his control over the fort of Chunar and the region of south Bihar. The old Afghan nobles fled to Gujarat. This they did to join the service of Sultan Bahadur Shah who wanted to capture Delhi.

Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat was financially as well as militarily the most powerful of the Indian rulers. Some of the coastal towns in Gujarat had already emerged as emporium of international trade. These port-towns were visited by merchants from different foreign countries. Thus, this trade yielded huge revenue to the state exchequer through customs dues. He also possessed a strong artillery.

In 1531, Sultan Bahadur Shah started on an expansionist career. He conquered Malwa and annexed it to his Sultanate. In 1533, he laid siege to Chittor and conquered it. Thereafter, he decided to march to Gwalior against the Mughals. About this time, Rumi Khan, the commander of the Gujarat artillery, secretly entered into alliance with Humayun and assured him of his help. The Gujarat army was completely demoralised by the treachery of Rumi Khan. Finally, Bahadur Shah took shelter in the island of Diu and the whole of Malwa and Gujarat was occupied by Humayun. But this Mughal conquest was short-lived. Soon after his victory in Gujarat, Humayun received the alarming news of the rebellion of Sher Khan Sur who had declared himself as Sher Shah Sur. He seized vast land from the Sultan of Bengal and raided the eastern territories held by the Mughals. Humayun left his brother Askari along with other Mughal nobles in Gujarat and retreated to Agra. On Humayun's departure, Gujarat rose in revolt against the Mughals. Bahadur Shah

came back from Diu and chased the Mughals out from Gujarat and Malwa.

Meanwhile, Humayun made war preparation in a haste and started towards Chunar, a stronghold of Sher Shah. About this time Sher Shah took the impregnable fort of Rohtas from its Raja. Humayun conquered the Chunar fort, and entered Bengal without meeting any serious resistance put by the Afghans. In Gaur (Bengal) there was a period of inactivity on the part of Humayun. Sher Shah took full advantage of the situation. He closed the line of communication between Agra and Gaur and attacked the Mughal forces in the eastern territories upto Benaras. Informed about the deteriorating circumstances, Humayun started on the journey back to Agra. He met the Afghan army near Chausa in 1539 and was defeated with heavy losses. In 1540 Humayun met the Afghan forces under Sher Shah at the battle of Qannauj. He was defeated and fled to Kabul.

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## 2.4 THE SECOND AFGHAN EMPIRE

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Finally, after expelling Humayun, Sher Shah became the Emperor of North India from the Indus to the Bay of Bengal in the east and from Himalaya in the north to Malwa in the south. The Biloch chiefs of Multan and upper Sind and Maldeo in western Rajputana and Bhaiya Pura of Raisin were defeated. A centralised political system was again revived by Sher Shah Sur.

With Sher Shah Sur, a new era began in the history of North India. Certain important changes took place in the realm of ideas and institutions.

In 1545 he died in a mine blast. His son and successor Islam Shah (1545-1553) not only retained his system but also took steps towards its improvement whenever necessary. Indeed, theirs was a personal government that derived its strength and glory from their personal vigour.

### Check Your Progress

- 1) Discuss the extent of Sikandar Lodi's Empire.

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- 2) Match the following:

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|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Azam Humayun      | A) Governor of Bihar  |
| 2) Bahadur Shah      | B) Governor of Punjab |
| 3) Darya Khan Nuhani | C) Ruler of Gujarat   |
| 4) Jalal Khan Lodi   | D) Governor of Kara   |
| 5) Daulat Khan Lodi  | E) Governor of Kalpi  |

- 3) Under what circumstances Babur invaded India?

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## 2.5 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

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A number of new administrative measures were taken during this period. Afghan kingship also shows marked departure from the Turkish concepts. This change can well be seen in the formulation of almost all administrative policies.



## 2.5.1 Nature of Kingship

The kingship under the Turkish Sultans was highly centralized (See Unit 16, Sub-sec. 16.4.1 of EHI-03). The Sultan's powers were absolute. However, with the rise of the Afghan power, there also followed distinct changes in the monarchy. Afghan monarchy was primarily 'tribal' in nature. For them, king was 'first among equals'. In fact, political expediency also played its own role. Bahlul, being Afghan, could not look towards Turks for support. He had to virtually accept the terms of his fellow Afghans. The Afghan nobles must have enjoyed complete local autonomy. The only bond between them and the Sultan was to render military service when the need arose or required to do so. Such was the position under Bahlul that he neither ever sat on the throne in front of his fellow Afghan nobles, nor did he organised an open *darbar*. He used to call his Afghan nobles *masnad i all*.

However, a distinct change came with Sultan Sikandar Lodi who clearly saw the dangers of an unrestrained nobility. He is credited with having introduced such important changes into the political system of the Empire that transformed it into a highly centralised political entity.

Unlike Sultan Bahlul Lodi (his father), Sultan Sikandar Lodi demanded obedience from his nobles. His military success made the nobility completely loyal and subservient to him. It also suppressed its sentiments of equality with the Sultan. He is reported to have sat on the throne regularly in an open *darbar* where the nobles were required to stand, showing due respect to the Sultan like servants. Even in his absence, his *farmans* were received by high nobles with respect. The noble to whom the *farman* was sent had to come forward six miles to receive it. A terrace was prepared upon which the courier stood and placed the *farman* on the head of the noble who had to stand below. Then all those concerned had to listen to it standing. The nobles who failed to retain the confidence of the Sultan fell into disgrace. According to a contemporary writer, "any one who turned from the path of obedience, he (the Sultan) either got his head severed off the body or banished him from the Empire."

Though, in general the Sultan did not tamper with their autonomy at local level, at times the nobles were transferred and sometimes even dismissed. The Sultan expelled Sultan Ashraf, son of Ahmad Khan Jilawani, who had declared his independence in Bayana after Sultan Bahlul Lodi's death. He also exiled the twenty-two high Afghan and non-Afghan nobles for their involvement in a conspiracy against him in 1500. Jalal Khan Lodi, who succeeded his father as the governor of Kalpi in 1506, incurred the displeasure of the Sultan by not properly conducting the siege operations against the fort of Narwar in 1508, for which he was thrown into prison.

The nobles were also put to more closer scrutiny of their *iqtas*. But, in spite of these changes, the Afghan kingship basically remained unchanged. Some of the offices were made hereditary. The Afghans continued to assume high titles, **Khan-i Jahan**, **Khan-i Khanan**, **Azam Humayun**, **Khan-i Azam**, etc. They also enjoyed freedom to maintain informal relations with the Sultan on playground, marches, hunting etc. Thus, monarchy under Sikandar was more of a compromise between the Turkish and tribal organisations.

The process of centralization accelerated under Ibrahim. He believed that "kingship knows no kinship". Under him, the prestige of the Sultan went so high that even the royal tent was considered worthy of respect. However, Ibrahim's policy had severe consequences and proved ruinous to the interests of the Afghan kingdom. The Afghan nobles were not prepared for the master-servant relationship. This led to dissatisfaction and rebellions to the extent that some of them even collaborated with Babur to depose the Sultan. (see *supra*). When the second Afghan Empire was established in India (Surs), they had learnt the lesson well for they never attempted to establish tribal monarchy. Instead, Sher Shah Sur succeeded in establishing a highly centralized autocratic monarchy. With the coming of the Mughals on the scene, one finds the opening up of another chapter — the Mughals who were influenced by both, the Turkish and the Mongol traditions.

## 2.5.2 General Administration

Sultan Sikandar Lodi is also praised for introducing a sound administrative machinery. He introduced the practice of audit in order to check the accounts of

**muqtas** and **walis** (governors). Mubarak Khan Lodi (**Tuji Khail**), the governor of Jaunpur, was the first noble whose accounts came under scrutiny in 1506. He was found guilty of embezzlement and, therefore, dismissed. Similarly, Khwaja Asghar, a non-Afghan officer-in-charge of Delhi, was thrown into prison for corruption. The Sultan also reorganised the intelligence system in order to keep himself well informed about the conditions in the Empire. As a result, the nobles feared to discuss the political matters among themselves, lest the Sultan be displeased.

Interested in the well-being of the general public, the Sultan had charity houses opened in the capital as well as in the provinces for the benefit of destitute and handicapped people. The deserving persons got financial aid from these charity houses. Scholars and poets were patronised and educational institutions were granted financial aid throughout the Empire. He imposed a ban on the use of any language other than Persian in the government offices. This led many Hindus to learn Persian and they acquired proficiency in Persian within a short time. Consequently, they began to look after and supervise the revenue administration. When Babur came to India, he was astonished to see that the revenue department was completely manned by the Hindus.

Likewise, the serious interest taken by Sultan Sikandar Lodi in ensuring impartial justice to all and sundry in his Empire brought peace and prosperity.

Sher Shah seems to have been inspired by the history of Sultan Alauddin Khalji's (1296-1316) reign. He adopted most of the rules and regulations introduced by the Khalji Sultan. However, like Khalji he was not harsh in their implementation. In the **doab** region, the **sarkar** (the successor of **shiqq** under the Khaljis) was the administrative-cum-fiscal unit; while **wilayat**, comprising a number of **sarkars** in the outlying regions, such as Bengal, Malwa, Rajputana and Sind and Multan were retained for the convenience of defence. The **sarkar** comprised a number of **parganas**, each **pargana** consisting of a number of villages. The village was the primary fiscal unit.

The noble posted as incharge of **sarkar** or **wilayat** was not given unlimited powers. He was regularly directed through royal **farman** to implement new rules and regulations. The spies informed the king about the conduct of the officers. Anyone who was found failing in his work was punished, Khizr Turk, the governor of Bengal, was dismissed and thrown into prison because he married the daughter of the ex-Sultan of Bengal without Sher Shah's permission and acted independently.

Similarly, Sher Shah's policy with regard to the planting of Afghan colonies in the territories known for recalcitrant inhabitants also demonstrates the nature of kingship under him, for example, Gwalior was one of the places colonised by the Afghans during Sher Shah's reign. In short, Sher Shah was an absolute monarch for all practical purposes.

In organizing his nobility, Sher Shah took people belonging to different ethnic groups in such a way that his dynastic interest could be safeguarded. No group was strong enough to assume the shape of a pressure group. We find the non-Afghan nobles, Khawwas Khan, Haji Khan and Habib Khan Sultani holding the charge of important provinces with large **iqtas**. This shows that the establishment of a pure Afghan nobility was never a consideration with Sher Shah.

On Sher Shah's death, his second son Prince Jalal Khan ascended the throne under the title of Islam Shah. He overpowered and eliminated many senior and experienced nobles who supported his elder brother Adil Khan. After their elimination, Islam Shah was free to translate his political ideas into practice. He shifted his capital from Agra to Gwalior and also brought his father's treasures from Chunar. Thus Gwalior became the centre of Indo-Muslim Delhi culture.

It is also worth mentioning that Islam Shah went a step further from Sher Shah in centralizing the polity of the Empire. He took away the **iqtas** of the nobles and brought the whole Empire under **khalisa**. The officers were paid in cash instead of **iqtas**. The nobility and army were reorganized into new grades. Officers were appointed from among them to look after and inspect the proper maintenance of soldiers and necessary army equipment by the nobles. The nobles were also denied the possession of war elephants: it was a king's prerogative.

Islam Shah was very harsh in dealing with the nobility but he was benevolent towards the public. He provided people with the security of life and property by holding the officer-in-charge of a territorial unit responsible for the loss of property and life in his jurisdiction. Consequently, the officer in whose territory any crime was committed, went out of his way to arrest the culprit. Like his father, Islam Shah also ensured the administration of impartial justice in the Empire.

### Check Your Progress 2

1) In what way did the Afghan polity differ from the Turkish polity?

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2) Discuss the measures taken by the Surs to curb the power of the nobles.

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## 2.6 ECONOMY

The contemporary and near contemporary writers praise the affluence and low prices of the essential commodities during Sikandar's reign. According to Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi (the author of the *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi*), foodgrains, cloth, horses, sheep, gold and silver which people needed for comfortable living were available in plenty and at low rates. In order to understand the economy in totality we shall discuss its basic components in detail.

### 2.6.1 Agrarian Structure

The political system depended on the state's share in the surplus of agricultural produce. Sultan Sikandar Lodi formulated a definite agricultural development-oriented policy. This he did because his was a landlocked Empire in which only the reclamation of land for cultivation could augment his financial resources. There was abundance of arable land which could be brought under plough only if the peasants expected to enjoy the fruits of their toil. In an attempt to encourage the peasants to extend cultivation, the Sultan introduced important changes in the administrative system. He prohibited the system of *begar* (forced labour) that the peasants had to render to the landlords and the government officers. The peasants were also encouraged to bring new lands under the plough through other concessions. Rizqullah Mushtaqi states that even an inch of land was not left lying uncultivated. The state share in the agricultural produce was one-third and it was collected with the assistance of the village officials the *patwari*, (hereditary village officials) *khot* and *muqaddam* (village headman). The *zakat* tax (Sales and transit tax) was abolished.

The Sultan also allowed the peasants in the Empire to accept freely any one of the three modes of assessment prevalent in those days. The three modes of revenue assessment were crop-sharing (*batai*) measurement (called *zabt* system) and the *kankut* (appraisal). The first two methods were common in north India. The third one also seems to have continued during the Lodi period. Sultan Sikandar was particular about a standard measurement system for its merits. He is said to have introduced the *gaz-i Sikandari* of thirty-two digits for the convenience of the *amin* and *patwari*. It was used at the time of harvest. The *patwaris* were charged with the duty of maintaining the accounts of per *bigha* yields and the measured area of the fields under cultivation.

Sher Shah and Islam Shah also introduced important changes in the agrarian system. They overhauled the revenue administration of the Lodi period. Apart from appointing new revenue officials at the **pargana** and **sarkar** level, Sher Shah curtailed the powers and privileges of the land assignees (i.e. **wajahdars** and **muqtas**). The unruly **zamindars**, who often took to robbery and withheld the payment of land revenue due to the king, were forced into submission. They were also made accountable for every crime committed within the boundaries of their **zamindari**.

The governors (for the **muqtas**) in the provinces, **sarkar** and **wilayats**) were denied a free hand in adopting any of the known methods of revenue assessment at the time of harvest. The methods of crop-sharing and revenue farming were abolished and that of **zabt** (measurement) was enforced everywhere. The extra taxes called **jaribana** and **muhassilana** (fee for measuring the land and revenue collection) were also abolished. The offenders among the officials were punished.

Sher Shah ordered the land under cultivation to be measured every year at the harvest time. The state's share in the produce was determined according to the royal regulation. This system was prevalent throughout the Empire except for the combined provinces of Multan and Sind. The territory of Multan had been ruined by the oppressive Biloch rule. Therefore, Sher Shah directed its governor to develop the region and realize from the cultivators only one-fourth of the produce in accordance with the crop-sharing method. This system had prevailed under the early local rulers i.e. the predecessors of the Biloch chiefs. The state revenue-demand in other provinces was one-third of the agricultural produce.

Abul Fazl tells us that Sher Shah on the basis of fertility of soil divided the lands into three categories, the good, middling and bad. An average produce of these three types of soil was taken as standard yield per bigha. One third of this standard yield was fixed as state share. A **rai** (schedule of crop-rates) was prepared for the convenience and guidance of the revenue collectors. The state share now could be easily converted into cash rates, according to the market prices. Abul Fazl testifies to Sher Shah's achievements in this regard (for further details see Unit 17). According to Abul Fazl, "The revenue demand levied by Sher Khan (Sher Shah), which at the present day is represented in all provinces as the lowest rate of measurement generally obtained, and for the convenience of the cultivators and the soldiery, the value taken in cash money." Thus, it is clear that the state's share was fixed in kind per **bigha** but collected in cash after it had been commuted according to the prevailing prices in the area.

On the death of Islam Shah in 1553, the Empire suffered from chaos and anarchy caused by a mad race that the cousins and relatives of Islam Shah started for the throne. Lasting for two years it took heavy toll of human life. The peasants fled to distant places in order to save themselves from starvation. This provided Humayun with an opportunity to reconquer North India and lay down the foundation of the Mughal Empire a new.

### 2.6.2 Iqta System

The entire empire was divided into **khalisa** and **iqta**. The **khalisa** was administered by the state directly through, **diwan-i wizarat** i.e. the Revenue Ministry. The revenue collected from the **khalisa** went directly to the state treasury. During the Lodi period, certain **sarkars** and **parganas** were reserved for **khalisa** where the **shiqqdar** carried on the military as well as revenue administration as the Sultan's representative. He was paid his salary and allowances in cash up to twenty per cent of the revenue collected under his charge. Unlike him, the high nobles, to whom the Sultan assigned the revenue of an administrative unit (**parganas** or an entire **sarkar**) had to maintain a larger army contingent than the **shiqqdar**. The assignee was generally a **khan**, holding the rank of 5,000 to 10,000 **sawars** (horsemen). Such an assignee was called either **muqta** or **wajahdar**.

As for the nature of the **iqta** system under the Lodis (we have discussed **iqta** system under the Delhi Sultans in detail in Blocks 5 and 6 of our Course EHI-03), the nobles to whom the **iqta** was assigned in lieu of cash salary and allowances for his soldiers, was also held responsible for the maintenance of law and order and the defence of the territorial unit under his charge. His revenue accounts were annually checked and settled in the **diwan-i wizarat**. Further, the **iqta** was assigned to the noble was different from the land-grant

made by the state to the men of learning or other deserving persons. The **iqta** also differed in size. An **iqta** might comprise a **pargana**, less than a **pargana**, or even the entire **sarkar**. If the revenue collected in the **iqta** exceeded the amount due to the assignee, the surplus (**fawazil**) was transmitted to the state exchequer.

Since the **iqtas** were seldom transferred in practice during the Lodi period, the assignee took keen interest in the economic development of his **iqta**. The powerful nobles also developed friendly relations with the **zamindars** of their **iqta** and were thus able to enjoy the local support against the centre. Such a situation arose after the death of Sultan Sikandar Lodi when conflict of interests took place between the nobility and Sultan Ibrahim Lodi (son and successor of Sikandar Lodi).

To avoid such a situation **iqta** was made transferable under Sher Shah. Any **iqta** could be transferred from one to the other noble. For example, Shujaat Khan Sur, one of the senior nobles was transferred four times from Bihar to Malwa to Hardiya **sarkar** and then to Malwa again.

### 2.6.3 Urbanisation

It is also worth recalling that economic growth was associated with the growth of urbanisation during this period. As the reign of Bahlul Lodi ushered in an era of peace, new towns were founded in the Panjab and other regions. The process of urbanization accelerated during Sikandar Lodi's reign. The brief references available in the sources to the cities and towns founded during the period suggest that an effort was made in all seriousness by the Sultan and his nobles in this regard. The important towns founded were Sultanpur (in Jallundhar district), Sikandarabad (Bulandshahar district) and Sikandara Rao (in Aligarh district). A number of villages were founded around the village of Pilakhna in the **pargana** of Jalali (also in Aligarh district) with the result that Pilakhna developed into a township. Construction activities got a boost during this period. The lofty gate of the Pilakhna's **Jama** mosque is suggestive of the characteristic features of the Lodi style of architecture.

The most important city founded by Sultan Sikandar Lodi was the metropolis of Agra. It was built by the architects deputed by the Sultan on a raised ground between the village of Poya and Basih by the bank of the river Jamuna at some distance from the old fortified town of Agra. For the rapid development of the new city, the Sultan made it the headquarters of a newly carved out **sarkar** (a bigger territorial unit) as well as the seat of his government in place of Delhi. The Sultan and his nobles owned **karkhanas** in Agra. These attracted skilled artisans from different cities and towns in the country. Likewise, the court-generated trade attracted merchant caravans even from foreign countries, and in due course, Agra became a trading centre of international importance.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Examine in brief Sikandar Lodi's economic measures.

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- 2) Write a note on urbanisation under Lodis.

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## 2.7 LET US SUM UP

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Polity in the first half of the 16th century was mainly dominated by the Afghans—the Lodis. The Mughals also emerged on the scene, but they were still struggling to dominate the Afghan polity. This, in fact, was more a period of instability. The Afghan nobility was not prepared to accept the autonomy of the Sultan. It played a crucial role in determining the political events of the period. As political expediency demanded, Bahlul was virtually dictated by Afghan nobility. Sikandar, who succeeded in exerting his power, did attempt for a compromise. But, Ibrahim and later the Surs established an autocratic centralized monarchy, and made the nobility totally subservient to the Sultan.

In spite of political instability, people enjoyed prosperity and economic stability; prices were low, burden of taxation was reduced by eliminating various cesses. However, under Lodi Sultans *iqtas* became hereditary. Another characteristic of the period was the growth of urbanisation. A number of cities sprang up during this period including the famous city of Agra which was to acquire pivotal role under the Mughals.

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## 2.8 KEY WORDS

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<b>Amin</b>	: revenue assessor
<b>Baburnama</b>	: memoir written by Babur (also known as <b>Tuzuk-i-Baburi</b> )
<b>Iqta</b>	: revenue assignments in lieu of salary
<b>Infra</b>	: see the following text
<b>Kankut</b>	: method of revenue assessment in which area was measured and the revenue realized was assessed in grain/kind
<b>Karkhanas</b>	: during this period <b>karkhanas</b> were the places where articles were manufactured for Sultan's and noble's household. Royal store houses were also called <b>karkhanas</b>
<b>Khalisa</b>	: crown land; i.e. land whose revenue was reserved for the imperial treasury
<b>Pargana</b>	: an administrative unit comprising a number of villages
<b>Sarkar</b>	: territorial division consisted of a number of <b>parganas</b> . Between <b>parganas</b> and <b>sarkars</b> were the <b>shiqqs</b> but from Akbar's reign onwards <b>shiqq</b> was not commonly used
<b>Shiqq</b>	: an administrative unit comprising a number of <b>parganas</b>
<b>Supra</b>	: see the preceding text
<b>Wall/Muqta</b>	: provincial governors/ <b>iqta</b> holders
<b>Wazir</b>	: prime minister
<b>Wilayat</b>	: province. Provinces in this period are not well-defined administrative units. The well-defined provinces ( <b>subas</b> ) emerged for the first time during Akbar's reign in 1580

## 2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-sec. 2.2.1.
- 2) Governor of K<sup>er</sup>ala, ruler of Gujarat, Governor of Bihar, Governor of Kalpi, Governor of Punjab.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the salient features of Afghan tribal polity; how it was based on decentralization; and compare it with the Turkish polity which was basically a centralized one (see Sub-sec. 2.5.1).
- 2) See Sub-sec. 2.5.2. Discuss the policy of both Sher Shah and Islam Shah.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sub-sec. 2.6.1, 2.6.2.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 2.6.3.



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## UNIT 3 POLITY AND ECONOMY IN DECCAN AND SOUTH INDIA

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### Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Geographical Setting
- 3.3 Political Formations in the Deccan
- 3.4 Political Formations in South India
  - 3.4.1 Rise of the Nayak Kingdoms
  - 3.4.2 States in Malabar
- 3.5 Nature of Polity : Different Approaches
- 3.6 The Ruling Elite
- 3.7 Economy
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 Key Words
- 3.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will be able to know about the:

- geographical influences on polity and economy of Deccan and South India;
- political formation and its nature in Deccan and South India;
- role of the ruling elite (**nayak** and **poligars**) in polity and economy, and
- emerging economic trends i.e. the impact of the advent of the Portuguese in the region.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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This Unit provides a link between the developments of the 8-15th centuries and what followed after the decline of the two big empires—the Bahmani and the Vijaynagar in Deccan and South India. It also gives the background for the developments witnessed in the region with the entry of the Mughals. The study of this unit would help in understanding the change and continuity during the 16th century in respect of polity and economy of the Deccan and South Indian states.

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### 3.2 GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

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Geography plays a crucial role in the politico-economic developments. Certain salient geographical features of South India and Deccan influenced the developments in the region (see Block 3 of EHI-03). Broadly, the whole tract lying south of the river Narmada is known as South India. However, technically speaking, this tract consists of two broad divisions, Deccan and south India.

#### Deccan

In Unit 12 of EHI-03 we touched upon the geography of Deccan. Deccan is bounded in the north and north-east by Narmada and Mahanadi rivers, while Nilgiri hills and Pennar river form its southern boundary. To the west and east lie the Western and Eastern Ghats along with long coastal strip on both the sides. The area between the



vast western sea-coast and the Sahyadri ranges is known as Konkan, a sub-region of Deccan. The whole strip is full of dense forest, and the soil is not adequately fertile. The area boasts of great strategic importance. Therefore, a number of strong forts were built there. The famous ports of Chaul and Dabhol also come under this region. On account of its difficult access, local chieftains (*deshmukhs*) often manifested shifting loyalties and at times defied the Central authority. You would find that it was this geographical location that played crucial role in the rise of the Marathas. On account of its hilly and forest tracts, the Deccan states were difficult to penetrate, but, from the side of southern Gujarat it had an easy access through the fertile Baglana tract. For this reason it repeatedly fell under the sway of the Gujarat rulers. Finally in the 16th century, the Portuguese altered the balance in that region. With minor variations, Goa marked the boundary between the Bahmani and the Vijaynagar states.

The central Deccan (from the Ajanta ranges to the Nilgiri hills and Palaghat gap) possesses black soil which is good for cotton cultivation. The Khandesh and Berar tracts of Maharashtra lying along the banks of the Tapti and the Wardha and Painganga rivers were known for fertility. This led to frequent encounters between the Malwa and Bahmani rulers for the occupation of Kherla and Mahur. (for details see Units 11, 12 and 28 in course EHI-03).

Between the Krishna and Godavari lies the flat plain which is also famous for its rich 'cotton' soil. Then comes the Telangana region: its soil is sandy and does not retain moisture. The rivers, too, are not perennial; as a result, tank irrigation became important. Along the Krishna valley lies the Kurnool rocks where the famous Golkonda mines were located. The southern Deccan plateau (parts lying in modern Karnataka) is also rich in mineral resources (copper, lead, zinc, iron, gold, manganese etc.).

### South India

The region south of the Krishna Tungabhadra doab formed South India. The coastal belt in the east is known as Coromandel while the western tract from south of Kanara (from the river Netravati down to Cape Comorin) is known as Malabar which is bounded by the Western Ghats in the east. We have already discussed (See Units 12 and 27 of course EHI-03) how during the Chola period the focus of activity was confined mainly around the Kaveri tract which, during the Vijaynagar period, shifted further north-east towards Tungabhadra-Krishna doab (the Rayalseema tract) where the capital of Vijaynagar was situated. Throughout the 13-16th century, this tract remained the centre of struggle: first, between Vijaynagar and Bahmani, and later between Vijaynagar and its successor Nayak states and the Bijapur rulers. The Qutb Shahi rulers also joined the conflict frequently.

Another feature that influenced the 16th century South Indian polity, economy and society was the migration of the Telugu population from the northern tracts (of South India) which started from the mid-15th century and continued during the 16th century. Interestingly, this movement was from the coastal and deltaic wet land areas, which were greatly fertile, well-cultivated and well-irrigated. There might have been numerous reasons for these migrations like, the Bahmani pressure; deliberate attempts on the part of the Vijaynagar rulers to extend their dominion further south; natural process, that is, movement from more densely populated areas; the soil was well suited to the migrants since it was excellent for dry farming, etc. At any rate, it had deep socio-economic impact. For example, the development of dry farming led to the rise of tank irrigation which became the crucial part of the 16th century South Indian economy. Secondly, its comparatively low productivity yielded low surplus which helped in the rise of what the modern scholars call "portfolio capitalists" in this tract.

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## 3.3 POLITICAL FORMATIONS IN THE DECCAN

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The decline of the Bahmani power gave way to the rise of five kingdoms in the Deccan (see Unit 28 of EHI-03). The death of Mahmud Gawan, an Afaqi noble, virtually sealed the fate of the Bahmani power in the Deccan and, finally, the death of Mahmud Shah (1482-1518) of the Bahmani rule. The crucial factor in the decline

was the long-drawn conflict between the Afaqis and the Deccanis. Both of these factions were dissatisfied. For example, the Deccanis blamed the Sultan for showing extra favour to the Afaqis while the Afaqis felt their position was no more secure and stable.

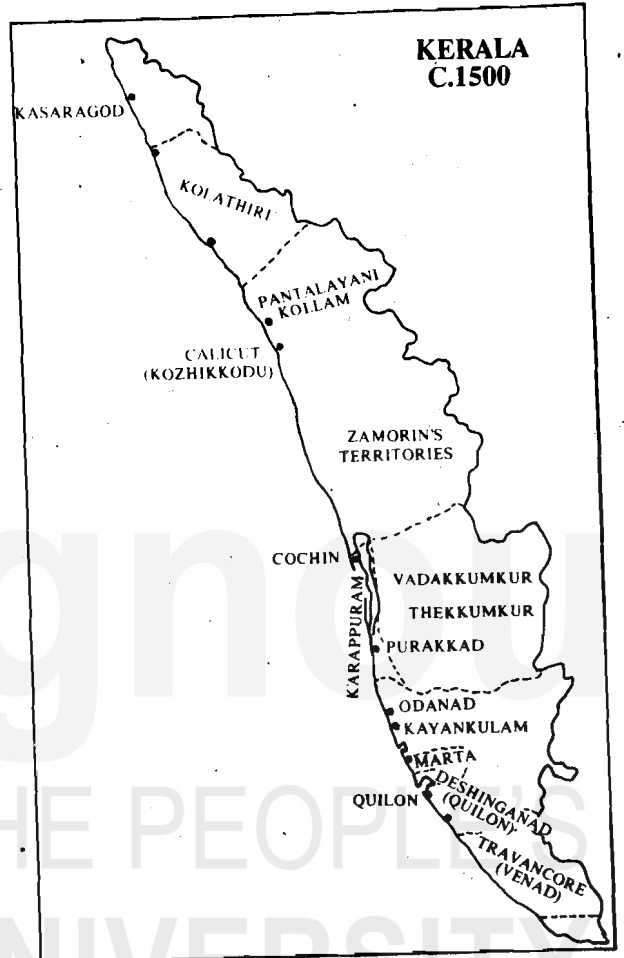
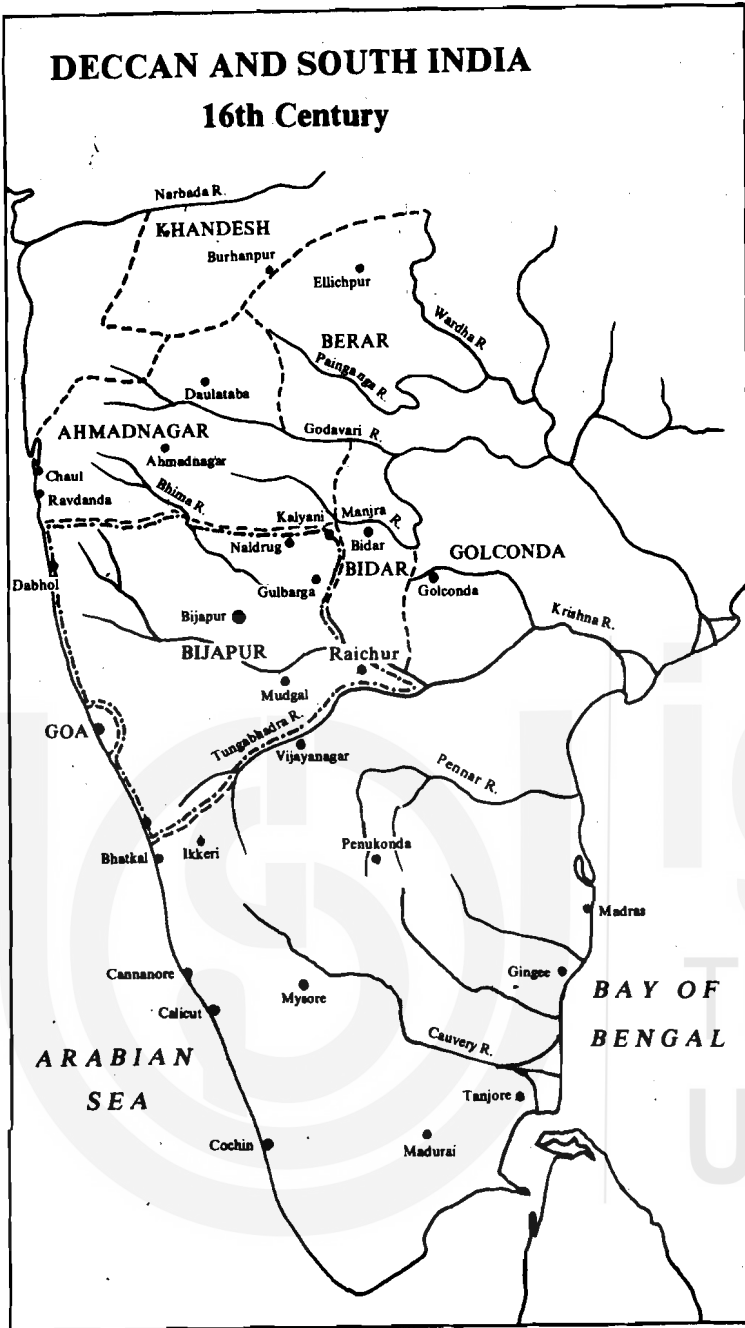
The factors which contributed towards the establishment of the Deccan kingdoms had started emerging during the Bahmani rule itself. The Bahmani rule was on the decline. It is important to note that the founders of all the Deccani kingdoms were at one point of time Bahmani nobles who had served one or the other Bahmani ruler. Yusuf Adil Shah, the founder of the Adil Shahi dynasty at Bijapur (1489) was the **tarafdār** of Bijapur; Nizam Shah Bahri, the founder of the Nizam Shah kingdom at Ahmednagar (1496) was in charge of a number of forts in the Sahyadri ranges; Qasim Barid ul Mamalik, founder of Barid Shahi dynasty at Bidar (1504) served as **kotwal** of Bidar as well as **wakil** during Mahmud Shah's reign; Fathullah Imad Shah, the founder of the Imad Shahi dynasty of Berar (1510) served as **tarafdār** of Berar; and Quli Qutbulmulk, the founder of the Qutb Shahi dynasty at Golkonda (1543) held the governorship of Telangana.

Out of the five states that emerged after the decline of the Bahmani kingdoms, the founders of the three—Bijapur, Bidar and Golkonda—were Afaqi nobles. Ahmednagar and Berar were under the Deccani nobles. But the Afaqi-Deccani factor hardly dominated their relationships. Instead, it was based more on what suited their interest, circumstances and exigencies of the time. Accordingly, even an Afaqi state could join hands with a Deccani power against another Afaqi and vice-versa.

The history of the 16th century Deccani states cannot be studied in isolation. Each wanted to extend its dominion at the cost of the other. As a result, alliances and counter-alliances were a regular feature.

As repeatedly pointed out geography played a crucial role in the Deccan politics. The geographic location of Ahmednagar (in the north), Golkonda (in the east) and Bijapur (in the south) was such that it provided them enough room for extension towards further north and south. Thus, these kingdoms had the natural advantage to gain strength. Bidar and Berar (situated in the central Deccan) sandwiched as they were between the power blocks, remained as mere pawns in the hands of one or the other Deccani power. Perhaps, shifting loyalties was the only strategy for their existence.

Bijapur (surrounded by Ahmednagar in the north, Bidar in the east and Vijaynagar and its successor Nayak states in the south) coveted the fertile plains of the Krishna-Tungabhadra doab. This clashed with the interests of the South Indian states and also with those of Bidar and Golkonda. Again, its interests in Sholapur and Naldurg were the chief factor behind the conflict with Ahmednagar. For Golkonda (surrounded by Berar in the north, Bidar in the west and the Vijaynagar and successor Nayak kingdoms in the south), the existence of Bidar and Berar was very important to serve as a buffer between Golkonda and Bijapur and Ahmednagar and Golkonda. The latter preferred the help of Ahmednagar for its ambitious plans in the Mudgal and Raichur doab. On the other hand, Ahmednagar, too, needed the help of Golkonda against the aggressive designs of Bijapur over Naldurg, Sholapur and Gulbarga. Berar was in constant conflict with Ahmednagar in the west, and Golkonda in the south. The only state left to ally with was Bijapur. Therefore, Bijapur-Berar alliance was more lasting during the first half of the 16th century. But during the second half of the century, the situation gradually changed. This was because Bijapur's interests lay more in gaining the favour of Ahmednagar and Bidar in its conflict against Golkonda and Vijaynagar. Bijapur helped Murtaza Nizam Shah to occupy Berar in 1574. Bijapur annexed Bidar in 1619. However, the scene in the Deccan changed drastically with the rise of the Mughals who invaded Ahmednagar in 1595. This invasion compelled the Deccani kingdoms to seek for new compromises and balances (for further details see Unit 9).



**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Define the following :

Konkat .....

.....

Malabar .....

.....

Coromandel .....

.....

2) Match the following:

A	B
i) Bijapur	Nizam Shahi
ii) Golkonda	Barid Shahi
iii) Berar	Adil Shahi
iv) Bidar	Imad Shahi
v) Ahmednagar	Qutb Shahi

3) Put a ✓ for True and a ✗ for False statement.

- i) Nizamshahi rulers wanted to occupy Raichur doab.
- ii) Afaqi-Deccani factor hardly played any significant role in the post-Bahmani politics in the Deccan.
- iii) After 1550's there occurred a change in Bijapur's relations with Berar.
- iv) Golkonda wanted to occupy Mudgal and Sholapur.

### 3.4 POLITICAL FORMATIONS IN SOUTH INDIA

By 1500, the entire South India formed part of the Vijaynagar empire with the exclusion of Malabar (the south-western coast) and Tirumelveli. Later, even Tirunelveli, too, was annexed (in 1540) by the Vijaynagar empire. At the onset of our period under study, there were four independent kingdoms in the Malabar region: Kolathunad (Cannanore), ruled by the Kolathiris, Kozhikode (Calicut) under the Samudri raja, Venad under the hegemony of the Tiruvadis and, the upcoming Cochin state. During the course of the 16th century, within the Vijaynagar empire, we see the emergence of the Nayak kingdoms of Ikkeri, Senji (Gingee), Odeyar Mysore, Madurai and Tanjore which continued to remain notionally subordinate to Vijaynagar.

The political formations in South India under Krishnadeva Raya and his successors have been dealt with in Unit 27 of the Course EHI-03. Here our emphasis is on the Nayak kingdoms and Malabar states.

#### 3.4.1 Rise of The Nayak Kingdoms

When did the Nayak kingdoms emerge? For some historians (Nilakantha Sastri, etc.) the defeat of Vijaynagar (in 1565) generated rebellions. It also led to the growth of the 'tyranny of Palayagars' which resulted in the independence of Nayaks of Madura, Tanjore and Senji. But for others (Burton Stein, etc.), the rise of the Nayaks may be traced to the 1530's. Let us trace briefly the development of each Nayak kingdom.

##### Senji

The kingdom of Senji (along eastern coast from Palar in the north to Coleroon in the south) under a nayak seems to have originated during Krishnadevaraya's reign. Its first nayak was Vaiappa (1526-1544). Till 1592, all the nayaks of Senji remained loyal to Vijaynagar. However, the Vijaynagar ruler, Venkata I shifted his capital after 1592 from Penukonda to Chandragiri in order to strengthen Vijaynagar's hold over the nayaks. This gave rise to resentment among the nayaks as they expected Vijaynagar's interference in their internal affairs. (This was the main reason for frequent evasion of payment of tribute by the nayaks to Vijaynagar which ultimately led to civil war after Venkata I's death in 1614.) One instance of such interference was that the nayak of Vellore, who was subordinate to Senji Nayak, was encouraged by Venkata I to disregard the latter's authority. Venkata I followed the policy of 'divide and rule' to weaken the nayaks of various tracts within the Empire. All this led the nayaks of Vellore and Senji to rebel (sometime after 1600). Later, Vellore and Senji were taken over by Venkata I (1600-1608).

### Tanjore

Tanjore (modern Tanjore and North Arcot) under a **nayak** emerged during Achyutaraya's reign in 1532 under Sevvappa Nayak. The **nayaks** of Tanjore remained loyal to Vijaynagar throughout the 16th century. They always sided with the Empire in its battles. For example, they helped Venkata I against Golkonda invasion and this loyalty continued till Venkata I's death in 1614.

### Madura

Madura (south of the Kaveri) was put under a **nayak** sometime during the last years of Krishnadevaraya's reign (1529). The first **nayak** was Vishvanath (d. 1564). By and large, he and his successors remained loyal to Vijaynagar even at the battle of Talikota. They helped the Empire against the Portuguese. But in the early 1580s, tension cropped up between Venkata I and Virappa Nayak. Perhaps, the latter attempted to evade tribute which was taken care of by Venkata I by sending his army to collect revenue. Again, when Muttu Krishnappa Nayak evaded tribute around 1605 Venkata I had to send his army once again. This shows that during the closing years of his reign when Venkata I imposed more and more centralization, the **nayaks** attempted to challenge his authority.

### Ikkeri

The **nayaks** of Ikkeri (north Karnataka) also arose during Krishnadevaraya's reign. The first **nayak** was Keladi Nayaka Chaudappa who served Achyutaraya and Ramaraja. Sadasiva Nayak (1540-65), the successor and son of Chaudappa, was behind Bijapur's defeat at the hands of Ramaraya and, as a reward received the title of 'Raya'; later, his military exploits won him the title of 'Raja' from Ramaraya. Tulu **nayaks** of Ikkeri remained loyal to Vijaynagar throughout the 16th century, but in the early years of the 17th century they became practically independent under Venkatappa Nayaka I (1586-1629). The **nayaks** of Ikkeri always remained under heavy pressure from Bijapur, but they were able to repel the latter's attacks. Besides, they also met hostility from the Odeyar **nayaks** of Mysore. The Ikkeri **nayaks** also cast greedy eyes over Gersoppa, the richest tract for pepper in north Canara. This led to regular campaigns to subdue the queen Bhairavadevi of Gersoppa.

### Odeyar Mysore

The history of the Odeyar chiefs goes back to 1399 when they settled in this region. But it was under Chamaraja III (1513-53) and his son Timmaraja (1553-72) that the Odeyars came into prominence. Vijaynagar's hold over this territory (especially Ummattur) was never complete. We find that the most powerful of the Vijaynagar ruler Krishnadevaraya found it difficult to curb these Ummattur chiefs. Odeyar **nayaks** continued to defy the Vijaynagar might till the Raja finally succeeded in 1610 in ousting the Vijaynagar viceroy of Seringapatam and made it his capital.

## 3.4.2 States in Malabar

By the turn of the 15th century, there were three prominent kingdoms in Malabar:

(i) Kolathunad or Cannanore (north of Calicut, from Netravati river in the north to Korappuzha in the south, ruled by Kolathiris); (ii) Kozhikode or Calicut (between the Kolathiri kingdom in the north to the Tiruvadi kingdom in the south, ruled by the Zamorin) and, (iii) Venad or Travancore (from Quilon in the north to Cape Comorin in the south). Besides, Cochin was the emerging state. The main feature of the 16th century Malabar polity was perpetual warfare between Kolathunad and Kozhikode; and between the latter and Cochin (Nayar) **rajas**. Both, Kolathunad and Cochin (Kshatriya) **rajas** claimed superior lineage. Besides these four major rulers, there existed a number of small chiefs/**rajas** at Tanur, Cranganore, Mangat, Idappalli, Vedakkumkur, Procaud, Kayamkulam and Quilon. The **rajas** of Cranganore, Idappalli and Vedakkumkur were subordinated to Calicut. Idappalli was important for Calicut for it provided a base for their operations against Cochin.

Further, the socio-political structure of Kerala was such that often the **rajas** held a right and property in each other's territory. Thus, in the Malabar political structure there was enough room for extra-territorial claims. For example, Calicut had many rights over the temples of Cochin and Travancore. Similarly, there were many **rajas** who were not subordinate to Calicut but they exercised authority over many temples in the Zamorin's territory. During the 16th century, Calicut had certain distinct advantages over other Malabar kingdoms; first, it was the great centre of Western

trade; secondly, it had strong naval power and; thirdly, it had the support of Arab traders who provided arms and horses.

The 16th century history of Malabar coincides with the early history of the Portuguese in India (for the establishment of the Portuguese power in Malabar see Unit 04). The Arab merchants of Calicut were apprehensive of the Portuguese designs from the very beginning. The Zamorins supported them against the Europeans. On the other hand, Calicut's rivalry with Cannanore and Cochin forced them to cultivate friendship with the Portuguese. Every Zamorin used to depose the then Cochin raja at his accession. Besides, they forced Cochin to sell all its products through Calicut. To retaliate this was an apt opportunity for Cochin. Its ruler allowed the Europeans to establish a factory in Cochin. The Portuguese exploited the situation to their advantage. They realized that Calicut was the major hindrance to control the Malabar trade. Hence, throughout the 16th century, the Portuguese carried on armed clashes against Calicut. With a view to drive out the Portuguese, the Zamorins at times allied with Bijapur, Gujarat, Ahmednagar and Egypt. However, the efforts were without success. At any rate, the Zamorins continued to harass the Portuguese on lands. Even on the seas the Portuguese found it difficult to destroy Calicut's naval power which was organized under the celebrated Marakkar family of admirals. From 1528 to 1598, the Portuguese-Zamorin clashes were mainly confined to the seas. It was only in 1599 that the Portuguese succeeded in making a breakthrough against the Marakkars.

The Portuguese control was effective at only those places where they had built their fortresses—Cannanore, Cochin, Procaud and Quilon. But their highhandedness and cruelty compelled even these allies to part with them in spite of their traditional rivalries with Calicut. For example, the Cannanore rulers, who supported the Portuguese against Calicut in the early years, later supported the Zamorin in 1558-60 against the Portuguese. Similarly the raja of Tanur, who had become a Christian and supported the Portuguese against Calicut, turned his back to the Europeans. In fact, it were only Cochin, Procaud and Quilon with whom Portuguese succeeded in maintaining a lasting friendship.

### Check Your Progress 2

1) Name the kingdoms of Malabar.

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2) When did the Nayak kingdoms emerge?

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3) Discuss the nature of Nayak-Vijaynagar relations during the 16th century.

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4) Who were the Zamorins? Discuss their relations with the Portuguese.

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### 3.5 NATURE OF POLITY : DIFFERENT APPROACHES

The nature of the political formations of the Deccani kingdoms was somewhat different from that of the South India. However, according to a recent study (Sanjay Subrahmanyam), there exists 'little difference between the states north and south of Pennar', i.e. between the Deccan and Vijaynagar and successor Nayak states. Sanjay Subrahmanyam says that everywhere one finds 'tributary chieftains' (**nayaks** and **Palaiyakkarars** etc.), and presence of revenue farming.

The Deccani states borrowed extensively from the system of their predecessor i.e. the Bahmanis. That is why Turko-Persian elements were dominant. This provided the crucial background for the newly established states. M.A. Nayeem characterises the Bijapur state as 'feudal'. For him, the system was based on 'contractual relations' i.e., in lieu of protection the nobles promised 'allegiance and service' to the ruler. But all the Deccani states were 'centralized' monarchies where Sultan's power was almost absolute. Besides, there also existed fiscal linkage between the periphery and the core. There was no notion of shared sovereignty in contrast to Vijaynagar. Whatever power the Velama, Reddi or Maratha chiefs might have enjoyed under the Deccani rulers, they were under direct central control. However, when the Deccani states started expanding towards further south they satisfied themselves with tributes only, as it was practically difficult for them to directly administer those distant regions. J.F. Richards defines Golkonda as a 'conquest state'. No doubt, the 16th century Deccan polities as such, are marked by constant warfare (see Unit 9). Nevertheless, we cannot describe them a 'conquest state' on the lines of Vijaynagar. The nature of expansion of Vijaynagar differs entirely from that of the Deccani kingdoms: in the former the 'Telugu **nayaks**' were instrumental in the expansion, whereas in the latter the monarchy or the centralised state was directly involved in the expansion process.

As for the nature of South Indian states, some historians have termed the Vijaynagar state as 'feudal'; some call it a 'war state' others have highlighted its 'segmentary' character. We have already discussed it in detail in Blocks 3 and 7, Course EHI-03. In the 'feudal' model, the chiefs were required to render military service to their overlords, but they were free to administer their territories. In the 'segmentary' state, the peripheral chiefs recognized the ritual sovereignty of the Centre, but the agrarian surplus did not flow from the segment to the core. However, Sanjay Subrahmanyam does emphasize that (even as late as 17th century) revenue flow from Madurai, Senji and Tanjavur regions was substantial. In any case, during the 16th century, the 'segmentary' character gradually changed towards centralization. For Burton Stein, who is the major propounder of the 'segmentary' state theory, the process began as early as Krishnadevaraya's reign. The change occurred mainly because of the widespread unrest among the Karnataka (Ummattur) and Tamil chiefs that led Krishnadevaraya to think of more comprehensive strategies. These included: monopoly of force under royal control; posting trusted Brahman commanders at the forts and recruitment of local force from the forest people (**poligars**), etc. We have also seen how Venkata I, especially after his shift of capital from Penukonda to Chandragiri, attempted to gain firm control over the growing might of the **nayaks**. But that resulted in the **nayaks**' revolts during the early 17th century. Yet we see that the process that began during the 16th century was completed during the 18th century in the formation of the strong centralized state of Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.

During the 16th century, specially from Rama Raya's reign onwards, another feature developed in the South Indian polity, that is what Burton Stein describes as the rise of '**patrimonialism**'. Rama Raya replaced the Brahman commanders of the forts (who had no kinship affinities with their overlords) by his own kinsmen and granted more autonomy to the Telugu chiefs (specially in Karnataka-Andhra region). He even placed the army in the charge of his two brothers Tirumala and Venkatadri. Thus began the 'patrimonial' polity. This filtered further. The **nayaks** attempted to expand their powers and influence on the basis of 'patrimony'—specially the chiefs of Maravar who, later in the 17th century, succeeded in establishing an independent kingdom at Ramnad and those of Kallars in Pudukkottai (Rayalseema). Through their clan/caste connections, the Maravar chiefs extended their influence over Ramesvaram, Madurai and Ramnad (their homeland). The Kallar chiefs extended their authority over almost the whole of Pudukkottai through their kinship ties.

They got the land in the form of warrants (**pattas**) issued by the Kallar Tondaiman **raja**. Similarly, the Lapakshi **nayaks** attempted to create 'patrimony' around Lapakshi. Virapannya Nayaka controlled Penukonda **rajyam**, while his other two brothers held offices in fortress of Chitradurga (under Achyutadevaraya). These **nayaks** continued to follow the same rituals and practices that were due to the Vijaynagar kings. Madurai Nayaks followed same coronation rituals which were followed by Krishnadevaraya. Vishvanatha Nayaka of Madurai also initiated royal practice of communal dining with his kinsmen and close supporters. Madurai **nayaks** even revived the old Kakatiya practice of associating chieftains with fortress and hence for the kingdom as a whole. Visvanatha Nayaka started the system of 'military encampment' under **palaiyakkaras**—each was the protector of a fort and, thus, they became members of the Madurai's ruling elite, **kumaravarukkam**.

The Malabar kingdoms were organised more on 'feudal' lines. The Nayar chiefs enjoyed autonomous powers in their territories for which they performed compulsory military service to their overlords. However, these 'feudal' chiefs were hereditary owners of land.

### 3.6 THE RULING ELITE

The ruling elite of the 16th century Deccan and South India enjoyed almost autonomous status in their territories. In spite of the fact that the character of the nobility as such was similar everywhere, there also existed differences among them as far as the composition and powers were concerned.

#### Deccan

The composition of the Ahmednagar and Bijapur nobility was much the same but the nature of Golkonda nobility differed. The majority of the inhabitants in the 16th century Golkonda comprised mainly the Telugu speaking Hindus while the nobility and the sovereigns were Muslims. Besides, as we have already discussed, the centre of activity shifted from the wet-area (Rajahmundry) to the less fertile tracts of the interior Telangana that led to the use of dry farming based on tank irrigation. This gave rise to the Telugu Reddi and Velama **nayak** cultivators from the Bahmani period onwards. The problem of the Qutb Shahi rulers was how to counteract this powerful local elite. These Telugu **nayaks** got frequent support from their Telugu counterparts i.e. the Vijaynagar rulers (this problem could only be completely solved after the defeat of the Vijaynagar ruler in the battle of Talikota, 1565).

However, the shrewd policy of Ibrahim Qutb Shah (1530-80) of patronizing Tamil culture, projected himself more as an indigenous ruler rather than an invader. He knew Telugu and had a Telugu wife. Moreover, he distributed revenue free land to both the Brahmans and **ulema**. Unlike Bijapur, he did not impose **jiziya**. The result was that when the Golkonda rulers faced the threat of the Vijaynagar might under Aliya Ramaraya between 1542-65, his Telugu **nayaks** remained loyal while his own kinsmen of the Tungabhadra **doab** supported the Vijaynagar rulers. However, these Telugu **nayaks** enjoyed little autonomy compared to their South Indian counterparts: we find them placed under some Muslim control. The more strategically important places were under Muslim commanders. But the revenue offices were almost entirely dominated by the Brahmans in the entire Deccan and South India. In the rest of the Deccani states, nobility was recruited mostly from a select band of the Muslim elite. The latter had to maintain a fixed quota of troops for which they received **moqasas** (see Sec. 3.7). They could hold the office till they enjoyed Sultan's favour and remained loyal to him. Their holdings were liable to transfer, but it happened rarely. They were left free in their areas where they enjoyed almost complete autonomy. When the Bijapur rulers expanded further south, they found it difficult to administer the tract directly. As a result, the Sultans followed the policy of 'condominiums' and satisfied themselves with an annual tributes only.

#### South India

The **nayaks** were the ruling elite in South India. The details about the **nayaks** and their privileges and duties, etc. have been discussed in Unit 27 of Course EH1-03. Here our emphasis is on the changes in the 16th century agrarian structure when the **palaiyakkaras** controlled the agrarian economy, and the **nayaks'** relations with their



ordinate **palaiyakkarars/poligars**, especially after 1565. As for the composition of the **palaiyakkarars**, it was made of Telugu, Kannidigas, Kaladi, Kallars, Morasu Vokkaligas, Tamils, Mulbagal, etc.

During the 16th century, the **palaiyakkarars** tried to replace the Tamil peasant elite by granting lands to the temples and by 'controlling the regal function of temple protection'. On the other hand, temple lands were often transferred to warrior chiefs. Such transfer of lands led to the decline of the temple economy—especially they lost their monopoly of record-keeping. The **nayaks** centralized record-keeping with the help of the Marathas and Kannadigas who had no local base. Thus, 'the **nayaks** created the conditions necessary for the emergence to inchoate centralised polities. The destruction of the local power-base and the abridgement of the institutional economy of temples were the first steps towards the emergence of absolutist state formations'. However, the transfer of agrarian power into the hands of the warrior chiefs did not wholly replace the peasants. In a **kudiningadevadana**, for example, the peasants acquired a permanent share in the produce of the land and hence they could not be evicted.

The warrior chiefs reclaimed large quantities of land and developed them into towns known as **palaiyams** its head was known as **palaiyakkarar**. Their control was almost complete over these **palaiyams**. They used to impose various taxes on peasants, artisans and merchants. The burden of taxation under these chieftains was very heavy which often led to tensions and unrest, especially among the peasants.

On the other hand, the **nayaks** at Madurai attempted to bring **palaiyakkarar/poligar** (subordinate warrior-chief) into the fold of the ruling elite itself. They were made incharge of forts/military encampments and became members of the ruling estate when they were called **kumaravarukkam**. However, this was not the case with other **nayak** kingdoms where the relationship was more of confrontation and conflict than of cooperation. At Tanjavur and Senji there existed no **palaiyakkarars**. Instead, the Brahmans and Vellala chiefs were dominant with no proper military control over them. The **nayaka** of Ikkeri and Mysore constantly clashed with their subordinate chiefs. Ikkeri **nayak** Sadasiva (1540-1565) dealt severely with the **poligars** of Andige, Muppina, Velur, Mabasale, Kanave and Sirvanti. Similarly, chiefs of Danivara, Kumbesi, Yalavandur, Hebbe Mandagadde, Karabura, Morabadi and Salanda raised their heads during Venkatappa I's reign (1586-1629), though all were successfully repulsed.

The ruling elite of the Malabar was drawn almost entirely from the Nayars. They were called Nambiars, Kaimals, Mannadiars, Kartavus and Kurups. They controlled the local power and in return were supposed to render compulsory military service. They had their own military organisation—**kalaris**. Sometimes they owed allegiance to more than one **raja**. They held absolute power over the lands under their control. Interestingly, the Malabar law hardly provided any privilege to the sovereign to either depose or confiscate the property in case of rebellion of any hereditary chief.

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### 3.7 ECONOMY

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We will deal in detail about the land revenue system and agrarian relations of the Deccan and South India in Units 19 and 20. Here we will take up these aspects very briefly.

Economy of all the South Indian and Deccani states was primarily based on agriculture. The coasts were well irrigated by rain water. For other areas, a well-developed system of tank irrigation was in operation, especially in the Andhra tract. Towards the west, canal irrigation was also important, especially in Ahmednagar.

For Karashima, Subbarayalu and Heitzman peasants were the proprietors in South India. However, Burton Stein and Sanjay Subramanyam cast some doubts. Since the peasants/tenants had the right to sell shows the existence of proprietorship. But during this period a distinction was made between the proprietorship on 'land' and proprietorship over the 'privileges' (fiscal rights). It was latter that was assured. There also existed communal holdings.

Land tax was the major source of states' income. In South India, the old system of the Vijaynagar continued. Revenue demand varied from 1/6th to 1/4th. In Golkonda, however, it was 1/2 of the produce. The states preferred to realize the revenue in cash. However, the Malabar states were exceptions where no land tax existed. The Malabar rulers depended more on customs dues, **janman** holdings, etc. But some historians emphasize that the land tax did exist. However, most of the land was held by the Namputhiri Brahmans which was revenue-free. Since rent payment to temples was comparatively less than the payment to the state the peasants preferred the former.

Primarily there existed three types of lands: i) the crown land which in South India was known as **bhandaravada**; in Bijapur **muamala** or **qalah** and in Golkonda **khalisa**. ii) the land granted to the nobles, subordinates, etc. known as **amara** (in the South) and **moqasa** (in the Deccan). These nobles paid a fixed sum annually to the ruler. iii) revenue-free grants—**manya** (in south) and **inam** (in Deccan). The prevalent form of revenue realization was revenue farming; i.e., right to collect revenue was given to the highest bidders who used to pay to the state/nobles a fixed sum annually and they were usually left free to collect from the peasants as much as they could.

The Deccani rulers retained the local revenue collection machinery. Revenue officials of different ranks worked at different levels. For instance, the tax official for crown land was called **havaladar** while, at **pargana** level, there were **desai** and **deshmukh**. Accountants were known as **deshkulkarni** and **deshpande**. The village headmen, accountants etc. were named **muqaddam**, **patel** and **kulkarni**. All of them received monetary share in the revenue for their work which varied from state to state.

In the coastal belt, separate governors (**sar-samatu**) were appointed who paid a fixed sum annually, similar to the revenue farmers. Though **amils** were appointed to serve as check on their powers, the states' interest lay more in getting regular payment instead of the welfare of the peasants.

Besides land tax, the state derived revenue from other sources as well—tributes, booty from war and plunder and, above all, from the customs. Bijapur rulers also derived considerable income from **jiziyah**; licence fee for private minting of coins was also a good source of income. The Golkonda rulers acquired handsome income from diamond mines. The right to collect taxes other than land revenue was held by the trade guilds who used to pay a fixed sum annually and appoint their own officials (like the revenue farmers). Mostly, they were from the Telugu mercantile castes.

An important feature of the 16th-17th century was the rise of 'portfolio capitalists'. Some scholars thought that the trading activity in India was in the hands of merchants who held no political or military power. However, recently (Sanjay Subrahmanyam) this is being argued, especially in the case of Coromandel, that the revenue farmers (mostly the **palaiyakkarars**), played constructive role in the development of economy. Besides their role as revenue collectors, they also indulged in agricultural trading, development of irrigation, shipping, banking, etc.

We get evidence of diverse sorts of merchants in this period: the Armenians, Portuguese, Telugu Balija Naiyudus, Chettis, Komatis, Arabs, Gujaratis, etc. The internal trade was largely in the hands of the Muslim Mapillas. On the Kanara Coast the chief beneficiaries were the Hindu and Jaina chiefs, while Coromandel coast was controlled mainly by the Arabs, Marakkhar converts, the Mapillas.

Some Scholars hold that the economy in South India did not deteriorate in the 16th century as thought by others. They emphasize that the **nayaks** stimulated economic activity by establishing market-places, towns, etc. The argument of constant warfare after 1565 is countered on the ground by them that it was a general feature that existed even during the early centuries.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) During the 16th century South Indian states show the signs of centralization. Comment.

2) Discuss the nature and composition of the Golkonda nobility.

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3) Define the 'portfolio capitalists'.

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### 3.8 LET US SUM UP

The 16th century Deccan and South Indian polity was marred by internecine warfare. This century saw the decline of the Vijaynagar Empire. The opinion that after the battle of Talikota, Vijaynagar was dismantled and the **nayaks** carved out their own independent regimes cannot go unquestioned. The irony is that the **nayak** chiefs grew up when Vijaynagar was at its zenith under Krishnadevaraya. The mighty **nayaks** of Senji, Ikkeri, Madura and Tanjavur remained loyal to the Vijaynagar rulers even after 1565, and it was only during the 17th century that Venkata I's policies forced them to rebel. The 16th century Vijaynagar polity shows some tendency towards centralization. Also, this was the period of the rise of 'patrimonial politics'. During this period, there emerged a class of 'portfolio-capitalists' who were not mere exploiters but contributed a lot to economic development. This century witnessed the rise of the Portuguese power in the Deccan and South India. At any rate, in spite of constant warfare in the two polities, the economy of the entire region did not deteriorate during this century.

### 3.9 KEY WORDS

- Afaqi** : the new Deccani nobles who came from Iran, Iraq and Transoxiana
- Amil** : revenue collector
- Baglana Tract** : fertile tract north of the Ghatmatha region in the north-west corner of the present Nasik district with strong forts of Salher, Mulher and Hatgarh; the latter protecting the route from and into Gujarat. This area acknowledged the suzerainty of Khandesh, Gujarat, Ahmednagar or the Mughals as circumstances demanded
- Condominiums** : joint sovereignty
- Deccani** : the old Deccani nobility
- Janman** : hereditary proprietorship

- Kudiningadevadana** : devadana (temple land) land granted as **kanipparru** (land tenure) to warrior chieftains
- Muamala/Qalah** : in Bijapur the terms were used for crown lands. However, **muamala** were centres of trade and traffic while 'qalah' were strategic points along the Western Ghats
- Nayak** : warrior chief
- Patrimony** : patron-client relationship based on kinship ties
- Sahyadri Ranges** : the mountain terrain in the west which begins from south of the river Tapti; also known as Western Ghats

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### 3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) You have to discuss their geographic location and characteristic features. See Sec. 3.2.
- 2) i) Adil Shah; ii) Qutb Shahi; iii) Barid Shahi; iv) Imad; v) Nizam Shahi.
- 3) (i) × (ii) ✓ (iii) ✓ (iv) ×

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Mention their names as well as their geographic location. See sec.3.4; Sub-Sec. 3.4.2.
- 2) Discuss in general the emergence of **nayaks**. See Sub-sec. 3.4.1.
- 3) You have to mention whether **nayaks** remained loyal even after 1565 or there occurred changes in their relations with Vijaynagar rulers. See Sec. 3.4.
- 4) Identify who were Zamorins and very briefly discuss the nature of Portuguese-Zamorin relations. See Sub-sec. 3.4.2.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss how there occurred changes in the 'segmentary' character and why? See Sec. 3.5.
- 2) Discuss how and why the Golkonda rulers retained the local elites but under central control; and also discuss the position of Muslim elites. In composition, discuss various categories of nobles. See Sec. 3.6.
- 3) See Sec. 3.7.

# UNIT 4 THE TRADING WORLD OF ASIA AND THE COMING OF THE PORTUGUESE

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## Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Factories, Fortresses and Commercial Arrangements
- 4.3 Commodities of Export and Import
  - 4.3.1 Malabar and Konkan Coasts
  - 4.3.2 North-western India
  - 4.3.3 Eastern Coast
  - 4.3.4 South-East Asia
- 4.4 Finances of the Portuguese Trade
  - 4.4.1 European Merchant-Financiers
  - 4.4.2 Indian Merchants and Rulers
- 4.5 Nature of the Portuguese Trade with India
  - 4.5.1 Monopoly Trade
  - 4.5.2 Trade of the Indian Rulers and Merchants
  - 4.5.3 Trade and Production
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Key Words
- 4.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to know that:

- the opening of the sea-route between Europe and Asia marked a period of great importance,
- monopoly over sea-borne trade was introduced by the Portuguese during this period,
- the system of trade and commerce introduced by the Portuguese showed the way to other European powers for trade, and
- the major items of export and import during this period.

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Units (nos. 2 and 3) we learned about the polity and economy in the two broad divisions of India namely, North as well as that of Deccan and South India. This Unit goes on to discuss the nature of trading activities through maritime trade. There was long distance trade connecting India with various parts of the South East Asian countries and West Asia. However, direct maritime trade relations with Europe, especially with the countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean, were not in existence. The Portuguese emerged as an important naval power in Indian waters especially after their occupation of Goa in 1510. (see Course EHI-03, Block 7 for further details).

The Chinese and the Al Karimi merchants of the Red Sea area were frequent visitors to the various trade centres of India till the middle of the fifteenth century. Then there was a sort of vacuum as far as the international maritime trade of India was concerned. Similarly, the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Turks is thought by some scholars (but questioned by others) to have disturbed the route connecting the East and the West which led the Europeans to look for an alternative trade route

with the East. Simultaneously, the Portuguese seafarers made systematic preparations for maritime exploits. They made use of their achievements in cartography and navigational sciences. After the initial breakthrough made by Vasco de Gama, organised attempts were made by the Portuguese to utilize the commercial potentialities of Asia in general and India in particular. Local rulers granted them permission to establish factories and other infrastructural facilities needed for the development of trade and commerce. In some cases fortresses were also established. At the same time, they initiated propagation of the Christian faith. Intermarriages, conversions and settlements of Europeans led to the emergence of new social groups. Many local rulers made political and commercial alliances with Portuguese, the first Europeans to indulge in trade during this period. The Portuguese example prompted other European nations to come to Asia to get a share in trading activities.

In this background in this Unit we will deal with the trading activities of the Portuguese in Asia. It also takes into account their interaction with the various sections of society in the Indian subcontinent from 1500 to 1600. The economic consequences of the Portuguese trading contacts with Asia in general have also been dealt.

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## 4.2 FACTORIES, FORTRESSES AND COMMERCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

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The Italian merchants had established warehouses (factories) in Cairo and Alexandria to carry on trade and commerce. Following this example the Portuguese, too, founded factories on the coastal regions of India and certain other places in Asia. Factory could be defined as a commercial organisation having an autonomous existence set up within the country with which another country had commercial relations. Each factory had an officer called factor who was assisted by a number of persons appointed by the Portuguese king. He was the agent of the Crown to promote economic, financial and administrative activities of all sorts. In all situations Portuguese national interests were paramount considerations. Factories also required protection from hostile elements. Therefore, to consolidate and strengthen their power the Portuguese also attempted to fortify their factories. A chain of factories and fortresses came into existence for the support of the maritime trade conducted by the Portuguese. These fortified centres were expected to serve the Portuguese to check the movements of vessels owned by the others and to function as areas for the reserve of military and naval forces. The system of factories had a great role to play in the commercial arrangements in the period beginning with the sixteenth century till the mid-eighteenth century. Let us briefly discuss the factories established by the Portuguese in different regions.

### Western India

In the Malabar region the Portuguese established their first factory in 1500 at Calicut. However, it had a short-lived existence (you have read in Unit 3 that the Zamorin of Calicut proved to be the major hindrance in the establishment of Portuguese power in Malabar). The Zamorins also did not allow the Portuguese to fortify their factories there. In 1525, finally, the Portuguese abandoned their construction at Calicut. However, in the other regions of Malabar coast, factories were established at Cochin (1501), Cannanore (1503), Quilon (1503), Chaliyam (1531), Rachol (1535), Crangannore (1536), Mangalore and Honaver (1568) and Bhatkal by the Portuguese. All of these factories were fortified in due course. Nizam-ul Mulk of Ahmednagar also permitted the Portuguese to have a factor at Chaul in the second decade of the 16th Century.

In the north-west, Cambay (Khambayat) was the main port of call on the route from Malacca connecting Calicut, the ports of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf with the ports of the Mediterranean. Besides Cambay, the Portuguese also established their factories at Diu (1509, 1535), Bassin (1534), Surat, Daman (1599) and Bhavnagar. Thus almost the entire coastal belt of Malabar, Konkan and north-west India was brought under the Portuguese influence.

Direct contacts began to be established with the Eastern coast of India in the wake of the capture of Malacca and the beginning of the Portuguese settlement there. The Portuguese navigators came across several merchants from the Eastern coast of India who had trade relations with Malacca and other South East Asian centres. The Portuguese collected textiles and other commodities from various port-towns of the Coromandel coast like Masulipatnam, Pulicat, San Thome, Pondicherry, Cuddalore, Porto Novo, Nagapatnam, etc. The latter was an important port for the Portuguese in their trade with Porto Novo, Malacca, Manila and other region of the east. Meilapore known as San Thome to the north of Nagapatnam, had also a Portuguese settlement which was surrounded by walls. The Portuguese also established a fortress at Manar in 1518 on the western coast of Ceylon. This fortress, though not on the main land of India, could control the movement of vessels to the East from the western side of the subcontinent.

The Portuguese also tried to establish commercial contacts with Bengal from A.D. 1517. The first effort in this direction was made at Chittagong, the chief port of Bengal during this period. After much manoeuvring, they at last obtained permission from Mahmud Shah, the king of Bengal, to erect factories at Chittagong and Satgaon in 1536. The second settlement at Hugli was granted to the Portuguese by Akbar in 1579-80. The third one was established at Bandel through a **farman** of Shahjahan in 1633. Yet, on the eastern coast during the 16th Century there were no fortresses as on the western coast. Still the settlements, with a few artillery, were able to oversee the movement of vessels carrying commodities.

### South-East Asia

With a view to having an exclusive domination over the trade in the Indian Ocean regions, the Portuguese found it necessary to bring under their control the important trade centres in South East Asia. The well-known maritime centre of Malacca was their target which they acquired in 1511. They established a few fortresses at Colombo, Batticola, Jafnapatam, etc,—all in Ceylon. Subsequently, contacts with Java, Siam, Moluccas, Martaban and Pegu were established. From 1518, the Portuguese started a settlement in China on the island of Sancheu. It was here that St. Francis Xavier, a Christian missionary, died in 1552.

The starting of factories in various parts of the subcontinent of India and neighbouring Asiatic kingdoms provided an environment suitable for long distance trade to the Portuguese.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) During the 16-18th century, in the context of trade and commerce, what does the word factory denote? What was its role?

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- 2) Why the factories were fortified?

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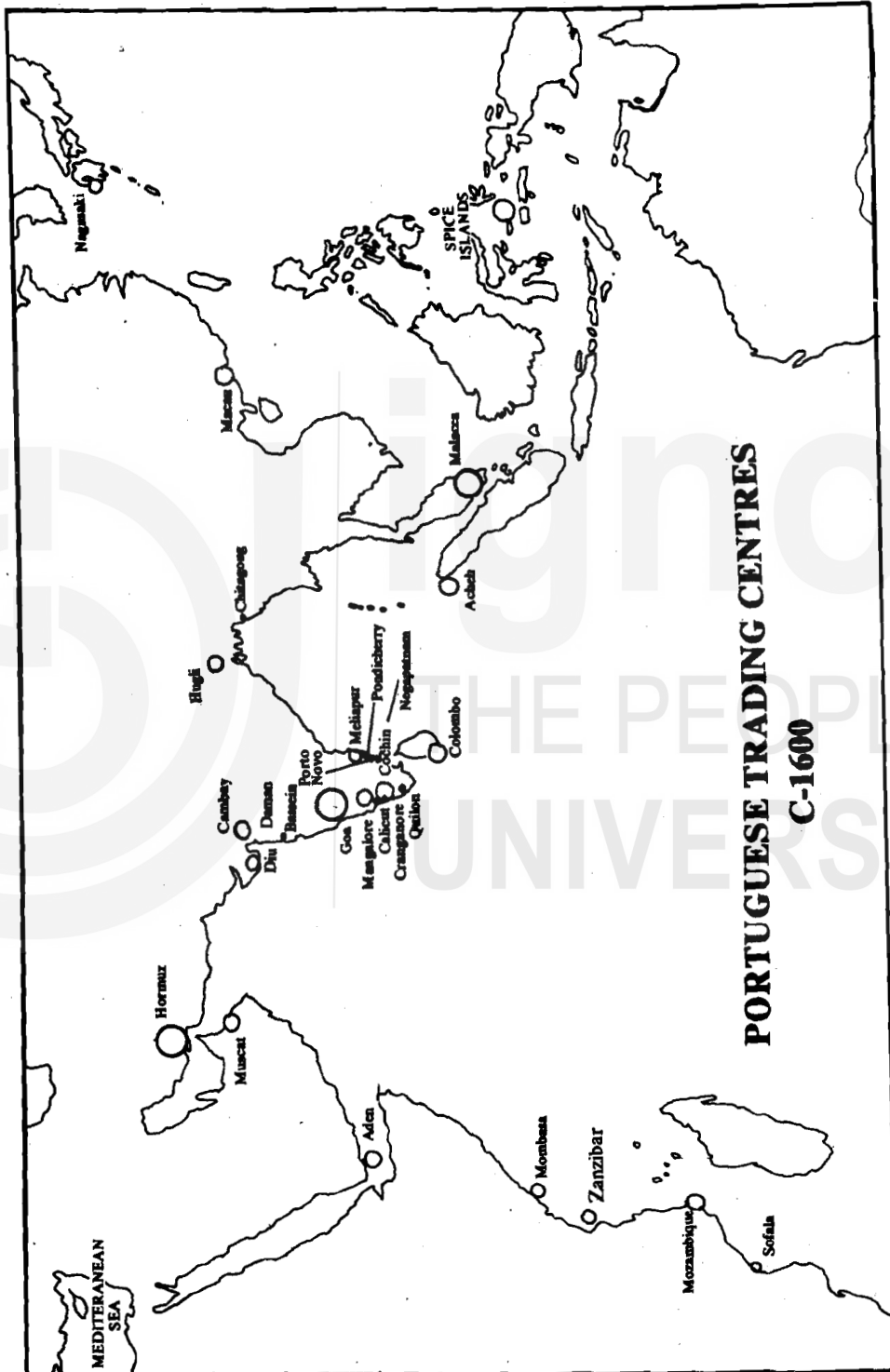
- 3) Discuss the pattern of Portuguese penetration in India.

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PORTUGUESE TRADING CENTRES  
C-1600



## 4.3 COMMODITIES OF EXPORT AND IMPORT

The chief aim of the Portuguese in discovering the sea-route connecting the East with Portugal was to collect spices directly from the places of production rather than from the hands of the intermediaries like the Italian or the Muslim traders. Pepper became a necessary ingredient in European food. The demand for pepper went on increasing, especially for the sake of preserving meat. Besides, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, mace, nutmeg and several exotic herbs from the east had a market in Europe. A special variety of textiles like Muslin, chintz, etc. and few animals like elephants, too, found their way to Portugal.

The Portuguese did not have enough commodities to exchange for those available in the East. Their commodities had a limited market among the eastern nobility. Hence precious metals, especially silver, minted or in bullion; were brought to the East from the West for buying goods.

### 4.3.1 Malabar and Konkan Coasts

Pepper occupied the first place among the commodities traded from Malabar and the Konkan coasts. In the initial stage pepper from Malabar was considered to be far better in quality than that from Malacca, Java and Canara. Towards the second half of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, pepper from Canara began to be exported in larger quantity than before. It is estimated that the Portuguese exported from Malabar about 25,000 to 30,000 quintals of spices of all sorts annually to Lisbon in the first decade of the sixteenth century. By the end of the century, the contractors were given a targeted export of 30,000 quintals of pepper from the Malabar coast to Lisbon. The records of the first half of the sixteenth century show that 36,664 quintals of pepper was sent to Portugal from the Malabar and Konkan coasts in 1546.

Ginger constituted another bulk item of trade from the Malabar coast. It was available as conserve, too, for export. Cinnamon was another commodity exported from Malabar, though its quality was not as good as that from Ceylon. White and red sandalwood also found their way to Portugal from the Malabar coast.

Besides these Myrobalans of all sorts were collected from Malabar, Dabul, Vijaynagar and Deccan in general for export to Portugal. Similarly sealing wax, indigo, spikenard, tamarind, arecanut, textiles, ivory and turmeric were other items that were exported in varying quantity to Portugal from the Malabar and Konkan coasts. Slaves, too, became a commercial commodity for export.

The request made by the Zamorin of Calicut in 1498 to Vasco da Gama gives a clue to the commodities that were imported into the Malabar and Konkan coasts. He had asked for gold, silver, coral and scarlet. Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese governor of Goa, gave a list of commodities to the king of Portugal in 1513 that could be marketed in India. This included items like coral, copper, quicksilver, vermilion, brocades, velvet, carpets, saffron, rose-water and cloths of various kinds. All these items were not from Portugal, but the Portuguese started procuring them from various places, like Flanders, Germany, England and other European countries. For example, damask, lead, cinnabar, gold from Soffala, French and English linen clothes, alumstone, tin, opium, steel, Genwa velvet, scarlet from Florence, red cloth from London, cloths from Holland, raw and worked corals, etc. were brought to India. Minted coins of various denominations were included in this list. All these were brought to Cochin which was the commercial headquarter of the Portuguese in India. From there they were later sent to various parts of India. When the Portuguese headquarter was shifted to Goa, most of the important articles like gold, silver and cash were taken there and distribution was done from there.

### 4.3.2 North-Western India

Indigo, textiles of various types, silk and curious items like handicrafts made of tortoise shells, etc. were collected from the North-western India for export to Portugal. Taffeta was one of the expensive export varieties. Satin, chintz, **malmal**, striped cotton cloths, cambric-muslin, silk scarf, Golkonda muslins and various other varieties of silk products available in Chaul, Dabhol and the ports of Gujarat were exported to Portugal. Among these items silks were produced in places like Burhanpur and Balaghat, chintz in Cambay, calico in the vicinity of Daman and Guingao in Cambay and Balaghat. The volume of textile products increased in the seventeenth century.

Copper, broadcloths and cash in various denominations were sent to the North-western coast. In addition to this, a few products such as pepper and other spices from the South were also taken to North-Western India for the purchase of textiles.

### 4.3.3 Eastern Coast

Textiles of various kinds constituted the chief export from the eastern coast of India. Sandalwood from the Coromandel was an important item of export to Portugal. Spikenard was cultivated in Bengal and this was brought to Cochin to be exported to Portugal. The most expensive item of export from this region was pearl, chiefly collected from the pearl fishery coast. Cotton and silk textiles and embroideries from Bengal were exported by the Portuguese. Ginger in conserve, myrobalans, butter, oil, wax and rice were the other commodities that were collected from Bengal.

The Portuguese brought to Bengal brocades, damasks, satins, taffetas, cloves, nutmegs, mace, camphor, cinnamon, pepper, chests, writing desks, valuable pearls and jewels. Most of these were from Malacca, China, Borneo, Ceylon and Malabar coast. Sea-shells or cowries from Maldives, white and red sandalwood from Solor and Timor were also taken to Bengal by the Portuguese.

### 4.3.4 South-East Asia

Various types of spices were collected from Ceylon and other South-East Asian regions; for example, Malacca and Java furnished pepper for export. Moluccas produced good variety of cloves. The best sort of cinnamon was furnished by Ceylon for export to Lisbon. Timor and Tennaserim produced good variety of sandalwood which was carried by the Portuguese to Lisbon. Sumatra provided sealing wax for Portuguese consumption. Borneo, Sumatra, Pacem and China furnished good variety of camphor for export to Lisbon. Benzoin from Pegu was also taken by the Portuguese to Portugal. Rhubarb was carried by the Portuguese from China and musk from Pegu.

In return, the Portuguese took cash, silver, gold and textiles to South-East Asian regions. Most of these textile goods were manufactured in India.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1) Why the Europeans were greatly interested in importing pepper?

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1) List the main items of export to Portugal?

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## 4.4 FINANCES OF THE PORTUGUESE TRADE

Taking into account the details of the Portuguese enterprise on the Malabar coast in the period between 1500 and 1506, an Italian estimated in 1506 that the total investment needed for conducting trade with the East was 170,000 ducats every year. The king of Portugal provided only one-fourth of this amount and the rest was raised by the merchants and financiers who collaborated with the Portuguese king. In 1500 he issued an order permitting native as well as foreign merchants to fit out their own vessels to the East. Revenues collected in the form of booty, tributes and taxes levied on ships of the private merchants also provided funds for the conduct of trade with India.

### 4.4.1 European Merchant-Financiers

Italians, especially the Florentines, occupied an important position among the financiers in the sixteenth century. Most of the Italian financiers concluded contracts with the Portuguese king. They supplied cash or materials to the king at Lisbon. The king used them to purchase pepper and other commodities from India. These commodities were given to these financiers at Lisbon in view of the contracts signed. However, some of the financiers also sent their own factors to India. Cash or commodities were always sent under the supervision of the Portuguese authorities to the East.

Indian commodities also attracted the German financiers and merchants. The Portuguese king welcomed them with open arms for he himself was finding it difficult to finance the Oriental enterprise on his own. Since copper was given in part-payment for Indian commodities, especially pepper and other spices, large quantity of copper was needed for transactions. Some of the German merchant-financiers like the Fuggers had a monopoly over the production of copper in Europe. This turned out to be of great use for trade with India. The German financiers could fit out their vessels, entrust cash and commodities to the India House in Lisbon to be taken to India under the Portuguese flag and buy the commodities from Lisbon according to the terms and conditions of the contracts signed.

During the second half of the sixteenth century both the Welsers and Fuggers joined the consortium along with Giraldo Paris and Juan Battista Rovaresco for the purchase of 30,000 quintals of pepper directly from India and agreed to send an amount of 170,000 crusados to India annually. Thus, the firms of Welsers and Fuggers continued to be closely associated with the trade of India.

Apart from the Fuggers, other firms like those of Herwarts and Imhof were interested in trading various sorts of precious stones and diamonds from Vijaynagar.

There were a few Portuguese merchants who in their private capacity participated in the trade with India during the sixteenth century. State officials posted in India were also allowed to participate in the India trade. According to their position in the hierarchy, they had some rights to take certain quantity of commodities to Portugal, in lieu of remuneration in cash. The details of their entitlements were spelt out in their appointment orders and this formed part of their emoluments.

### 4.4.2 Indian Merchants and Rulers

Several Indian merchants supplied commodities to the Portuguese on credit when the latter did not have cash or commodities to furnish in exchange. The merchants of Cochin, especially the Marakkars, were of great help to the Portuguese in this respect and their services were gratefully remembered by the Portuguese officials. Sometimes, the Portuguese king was persuaded to grant some privileges to such merchants. Khwaja Shamsuddin Gilani, who had settled down in Cannanore after his services to the kingdom of Bijapur, was often helpful to the Portuguese in finding necessary funds on loan.

Some of the local rulers stood surety for the Portuguese when they did not have money to pay to the merchants for the commodities bought by them. For example, the king of Cochin came forward to help the Portuguese several times making the required volume of commodities available to them on credit.

The Portuguese had armed vessels plying in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian sea. Ships carrying commodities which were not given passes (**cartaz**) by the Portuguese officials were confiscated by them (for further details see Sub-section 21.4.2, of Unit 21, Course EHI-03). The booty thus obtained yielded a sizeable source of income which was again invested in trade. Defeated rulers were compelled to pay tributes to the Portuguese, either in cash or kind. This source was also exploited by them several times for investment. The persons interested in sending their ships to other parts of India or to Asian countries were required to take passes (**cartaz**) from the Portuguese for which a fee was charged. Though this was quite negligible in itself, such ships were obliged to visit any of the ports in India where the Portuguese had customs houses, and to pay taxes. This was another source of income for the Portuguese. Thus, in a variety of ways, the Portuguese organised funds for the running of their trade.

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## 4.5 NATURE OF THE PORTUGUESE TRADE WITH INDIA

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Right from the time Portuguese arrived at Calicut they had demanded that other merchants, Indian as well as foreign, should be ousted and a complete monopoly over trade be granted to them. Portuguese ships equipped with arms and ammunitions threatened other merchants and confiscated their merchandise and vessels. By 1501 the Portuguese king assumed a grandiloquent title evincing his proprietary right over the Indian Ocean regions. The title proclaimed him **Lord of Navigation, Conquest and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India**. In 1502, the Portuguese demanded an exclusive right over trade at Calicut to which the Zamorin, the king of Calicut, did not yield. The Vasco da Gama declared war on all ships plying in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. He introduced an expedient under which those ships which carried a **cartaz** duly signed by the Portuguese authorities, namely the royal factor, were not to be attacked. This certificate was first issued in 1502.

Indian merchants, rulers and all those engaged in maritime trade, had to take **cartaz** from the Portuguese. While issuing such passes, it was specifically mentioned that certain items like pepper, horses, ginger, coir, ship pitch, sulphur, lead, saltpetre, cinnamon, etc. were not to be loaded on their ships. All these were monopoly items of the Portuguese. Routes and destinations of such ships were also sought to be controlled. Rulers like Akbar, and his successors, Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar, Adil Shah of Bijapur, kings of Cochin, the Zamorins of Calicut and the rulers of Cannanore purchased passes from the Portuguese to send their ships to various places.

### 4.5.1 Monopoly Trade

Till the end of the fifteenth century, merchants from various quarters of the world were found on the coastal regions of India engaged in trade and commerce. As Vasco da Gama reported in 1498, there were merchants from Mecca, Tenasserri, Pegu, Ceylon, Turkey, Egypt, Persia, Ethiopia, Tunis and various parts of India at the port of Calicut. It is well-known that Chinese merchants as well as merchants from the Red Sea areas used to frequent the Indian ports. There is no record of any group of merchants demanding exclusive right of trade in general, nor of any attempt made to declare a few or all commodities set apart for any body. But, with the arrival of the Portuguese, this state of affairs underwent considerable change. Kings were pressurised to forbid other merchants from trading with their ports. Similarly, certain commodities were declared forbidden to be traded by others. In other words, the Portuguese demanded monopoly of trade. The treaties concluded with the Indian rulers specifically mentioned this. The setting up of Portuguese fortresses at strategic places, surveillance by their patrolling vessels, and the insistence on passes for other ships were the attempts made to establish monopoly of trade in Asian waters.

### 4.5.2 Trade of the Indian Rulers and Merchants

The Portuguese attempts at establishing total monopoly did not bring about a situation in which trade conducted by the Indian rulers and merchants was totally uprooted. The king of Cannanore, for instance, used to collect passes from the Portuguese to send his vessels laden with commodities to Cambay and Hormuz. He imported horses from the above mentioned places though this was identified by the Portuguese a monopoly item. Sometimes such vessels ran the risk of being confiscated by the Portuguese. The same was the case with the kings of Tanur, Challe and Calicut on the Malabar coast. The nobles of Gujarat continued their trade despite the Portuguese monopoly. Malik Gopi, Malik Ayaz, Khwaja Sofar and others interested in trade plied their ships with or without passes from the Portuguese.

Besides, the local and foreign merchants settled in India carried on their trade with or without **cartaz**. It was estimated that out of the 60,000 quintals of pepper produced annually in the area between Calicut and Cape Comorin, only 15,000 quintals were delivered to the Portuguese factories and the remaining three-fourths were taken to other ports. This was termed illegal by the Portuguese. The Portuguese were not willing to enhance the price of pepper agreed upon in 1503 even after several decades. Hence, the producers of pepper did not have any alternative other than supplying it to the merchants who might buy it and send it to other centres of trade without the knowledge of the Portuguese. Moreover, several Portuguese officials conducted their own private trade in various commodities without the knowledge of their government. In fact, Portuguese monopoly was never effective in the Red Sea zone.

### 4.5.3 Trade and Production

Overseas trade conducted in the sixteenth century in Asia in general and India in particular was, by and large, of long-distance in nature involving the Asiatic ports on the one side and the Atlantic ports on the other. The commodities exported from India reached various parts of Europe. There were a number of elements in the pattern of this trade, as explained earlier, which distinguished it from just "peddling" trade.

In view of the greater demand for pepper, the cultivators strove to increase the production. It is calculated that the production of pepper in the Malabar area went up by 200 to 275 per cent in the period between 1515 and 1607. As there is no reliable account of the volume of production before the arrival of the Portuguese, it is rather difficult to make a comparison and assert with certainty the exact percentage of increase in production. At any rate, it is reasonable to conclude that the production of pepper in India increased after the Portuguese advent. But it must be borne in mind that the internal demand for pepper from the Mughal Empire and the external one from the Safavi Empire also might have contributed to the increase in pepper production in India.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss the role of foreign investments in the Portuguese trade of India.

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- 2) Define a **cartaz**?

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- 3) How did the Portuguese succeed in establishing their monopoly in Indian waters?

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## 4.6 LET US SUM UP

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We have seen in this Unit how the arrival of the Portuguese generated some new trends in the trading world of Asia, especially in the context of India. Maritime trade so far open to everyone was claimed now as the monopoly of the Portuguese and, to effect this, they built factories and fortresses. Introduction of passes for other ships lest they should be attacked was something unheard of till the dawn of the sixteenth century. The Portuguese after establishing themselves on the coastal regions of India reaped large profits by conducting trade in spices. For the first time in the history of international trade, commercial treaties with Indian rulers were concluded. The production of cash crops, especially spices, kept its stride with the increasing demand. It should also be emphasized that agricultural production had become enormously market oriented, with an eye to international trade.

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## 4.7 KEY WORDS

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- Cartography** : art of making maps
- Crusados** : a gold coin of Portugal; 390 reis = 1 crusados; reis (plural of Real), is a Portugal monetary unit; currently 1000 reis = 1 escudo (Portuguese coin)
- Ducats** : an Italian coin; a gold ducat was worth four silver rupees of Akbar; while silver ducat was equivalent to two silver rupees of Akbar
- Factor** : an officer in charge of the factory.
- Factory** : it was a commercial organisation having an autonomous existence set up with the permission of the local ruler by foreign merchants or powers
- Zamorin** : the title of the rulers of Calicut (perhaps a corruption of Samudra Rai)

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## 4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The concept of factory as commercial organisation is different from the factory where manufacturing activities were held. Factory was not the simple commercial representative of a nation but was more than that (see Sec. 4.2).
- 2) Point out the importance of fortified factories. See Sec. 4.2.
- 3) Examine how the Portuguese from Malabar moved gradually towards further North-west and Eastern coasts. Also analyse the difference in their Eastern and Western settlements (see Sec. 4.2).

- 1) See Sec. 4.3. It was mainly related to their food.
- 2) See Sub-secs. 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.4.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sub-sec. 4.4.1. Discuss why the Portuguese king allowed foreign merchants to trade in the East.
- 2) See Sec. 4.5.
- 3) Describe the role of **cartaz**; military power and advanced navigational skill in establishing the Portuguese trading monopoly (see Sec. 4.5.1).

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## A NOTE ON SOURCES

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The present section aims at introducing you to major sources of Indian history for the period under discussion. For this period, information is very rich in the form of literary works, archaeological, epigraphical and numismatical sources. However, here we will focus mainly on literary sources which were largely written in Persian. However, contemporary accounts in other languages, like Rajasthani, Marathi, Bengali etc. are also very rich. Besides, this was the period when the Europeans, (Portuguese, English, French and Dutch) also entered on the Indian scene. Their recorded impressions about India also constitute important source of informations. We are giving below a selective list of the contemporary sources which are important for you.

### Persian Sources

We get information in the form of administrative and accountancy manuals, statistical tables, administrative records (**farmans**, **nishans**, **parwanas**, etc.), epistolary works, letters, (**insha** literature), historical and topographical works, dictionaries etc. However, we are primarily concerned with the historical works.

The most important is the **Memoirs of Babur**, (**Baburnama**), written originally in (Chagatai) Turkish. It contains information from Babur's birth in 1483 to 1529.

The next is the **Humayunama** written by Gulbdan Begum (daughter of Babur) which covers mainly the reigns of Babur and Humayun and was completed during Akbar's reign at his instance. The **Tuhfa-i Akbar Shahi** (**Tarikh-i Sher Shahi**) of Abbas Khan Sarwani, written sometimes after 1586 is another important historical work. It preserves the details regarding the life and works of Sher Shah.

The **Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh** of Abdul Qadir Badauni is the only work of Akbar's reign not dedicated to Akbar. Badauni is highly critical of Akbar for his "heresies" and "innovation". The first volume deals with the history from Subuktgin to Humayun. This volume is a political narrative. The second volume contains the events of the first forty years of Akbar's reign. The third volume is **tazkira** where he gives short biographical sketches of the **mashaikh**, **ulama**, physicians and poets of Akbar's reign. Various important matters not dealt with in detail in the **Akbarnama** find their place in the **Muntakhab** (**mahzar**, etc.).

The **Akbarnama** of Abul Fazl is the monumental work written during Akbar's reign. It consists of **three** volumes, the first two are the narrative part and the third is the **Ain-i Akbari**. The first volume covers the period from Adam to the first seventeen years of Akbar's reign. The second volume covers the narrative at the close of the 46th regnal year (R.Y.) of Akbar. The third volume (the **Ain-i Akbari**) was completed by the end of the 42nd R.Y. **Ain** gives an account of the various imperial departments such as, the mint, calligraphy and painting, arsenal, royal stables etc. We also get information on prices of numerous articles. It also tells us about the duties of various revenue and administrative officials, revenue rates, etc. Cultural and philosophical aspects too are available. Besides, the **Ain** provides detailed **suba**, **sarkar** and **pargana**-wise figures for measured land, revenue statistics and other details of Akbar's Empire.

The **Tuzuk-i Jahangiri** or Memoirs of Jahangir (1st R. Y. to 19th R. Y. of Jahangir), written by Jahangir himself, provides information on Jahangir's reign.

During Shahjahan's period, three official historians were entrusted with the task of writing the official history of his reign. Amin Qazwini wrote the account of the first 10 years. Later Abdul Hamid Lahori took up the task and wrote the account of the first 20 years of Shahjahan's reign, followed by Mohammad Waris who covered 21st R. Y. to 30 R. Y. of Shahjahan. The works of all the three are called **Badshahnama** or **Padshahnama**. Shaikh Farid Bhakkhari's **Zakhirat-ul Khawanin** is another monumental work which is primarily a biographical account of nobles (Akbar to Shahjahan).

For the first ten years of Aurangzeb's reign also we get information from official chronicle the **Alamgirnama** (1668) compiled by Mohammad Kazim. After that, Aurangzeb decided to discontinue the task of official history writing. Moreover, we get ample information for his period in other contemporary accounts. Khafi Khan's **Muntakhab-ul Lubab**, Isardas Nagar's **Futuh-at-i Alamgiri** (1-34 R. Y.) and Saqi Musta'id Khan's **Ma'asir-i Alamgiri** (1710-11), **Nuskha-i Dilkusha** of Bhimsen (1708-9) are other useful works of Aurangzeb's reign.

### Rajasthani Sources

There is an ample quantity of source material available in Rajasthani that shed light on Medieval India. The most important is Munhta Nainsi's **Marwar ra Pargana ri Vigat** (c. 1666) and his **Khyat** (after 1667). The **Aradhakathanak** of Banarasidas Jain is also an important source of the period. The **Vir Vinod** of Shyamal Das compiled much later is full of important facts and documents.

### European Sources

Contemporary Portuguese, Dutch, English and French accounts throw much light on various aspects of Indian life. The nature of information available is in two forms: memoirs, travelogues and letters (of the Jesuits) and the Factory Records. Antonio Monserrate, a Jesuit, who wrote his *Commentary* (1597) in Portuguese, leaves a graphic account of Akbar's court. William Hawkins' work gives details of Jahangir's court. Sir Thomas Roe's (*Embassy*, 1615-1619) during Jahangir's reign offers political and economic information. The Dutch factor, Pelsaert's account is brief but very valuable. The *Travels* of Peter Mundy (1628-34) and Fray Sebastian Manrique (1629-43) provide important information about Shahjahan's reign. For Aurangzeb's period our information from European sources is very rich. *Travels* of Francois Bernier, (1656-68) gives vivid description of Agra and Delhi, revenue resources of the Mughal Empire, etc. Niccolao Manucci (1656-1712, in *Storia do Mogor*) enriches our information on various aspects of contemporary life. He was present at the battle of Samugarh. Thus, his account on the war of succession is very useful. Besides, information about Mughal Empire can also be gleaned from the large number of documents maintained by various Factors in India. Similar type of records about the Dutch East India Company is also available in Dutch archives. These records are very useful and important for understanding trading activities and commercial practices of the period.

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## SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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R. P. Tripathi: **Rise and fall of the Mughal Empire**

Prof. H. K. Sherwani and Dr. P. M. Joshi: **History of Medieval Deccan** in 2 vols.

A. B. Pandey: **The first Afghan Empire in India**

I. H. Siddiqui: **Some Aspects of Afghan Despotism in India**

M. A. Nayeem: **External Relations of the Bijapur Kingdom**

K. S. Mathew: **Portuguese Trade with India in the 16th Century**



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# UNIT 5 GROWTH OF MUGHAL EMPIRE: 1526-1556

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## Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Political Scenario on the eve of Babur's Invasion
- 5.3 Central Asia and Babur
- 5.4 Foundation of Mughal Rule in India
  - 5.4.1 Babur and the Rajput Kingdoms
  - 5.4.2 Babur and the Afghan Chieftains
- 5.5 Humayun - 1530-1540
  - 5.5.1 Bahadur Shah and Humayun
  - 5.5.2 Eastern Afghans and Humayun
  - 5.5.3 Humayun and His Brothers
- 5.6 Establishment of Second Afghan Empire in India: 1540-1555
- 5.7 Revival of Mughal Rule in India
- 5.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.9 Key Words
- 5.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit will tell you about:

- the political situation of India on the eve of Babur's invasion,
- Babur's successful campaigns against the Lodis,
- the conquests and conflicts of the Mughals with the local ruling powers, specially their clashes with the Afghans and the Rajputs,
- the emergence and consolidation of Sher Shah, and
- the circumstances and factors that led to the revival of Mughals in India under Humayun.

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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The scope of the present Unit confines itself to the process of the establishment of Mughal rule in India under Babur and Humayun. Afghans' bid to challenge and overthrow Mughal authority is also discussed. A brief survey of the Afghan rule has also been attempted. The Unit deals mainly with the territorial expansion under Babur and Humayun. The organisational aspects of the Mughals will be dealt in subsequent Blocks.

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## 5.2 POLITICAL SCENARIO ON THE EVE OF BABUR'S INVASION

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The first half of the fifteenth century witnessed political instability with the disintegration of the Tughluq dynasty. Both the Saiyyad (1414-1451) and the Lodi (1451-1526) rulers failed to cope with the disruptive forces (see Unit 2). The nobles resented and rebelled at the earliest opportunity. The political chaos in the North-West provinces had weakened the centre. Now let us examine what was happening in other parts of India.

In Central India there were three kingdoms: Gujarat, Malwa and Mewar. The power of Sultan Mahmud Khalji II of Malwa was, however, on the decline. Gujarat was ruled by Muzaffar Shah II, while Mewar under the leadership of Sisodia ruler Rana Sanga was the most powerful kingdom. Rulers of Malwa were under constant pressure of the Lodis, Mewar and Gujarat. This was because it was not only the most

fertile region and an important source for elephant supply but it also provided an important trade route to Gujarat sea-ports. Hence, it was an important region for the Lodis. Besides, for both Gujarat and Mewar it could serve as a buffer against the Lodis. The Sultan of Malwa was an incompetent ruler, and his prime minister Medini Rai could hardly hold the kingdom intact for long in the wake of internal strifes. Finally, Rana Sanga, succeeded in extending his influence over Malwa and Gujarat. By the close of the 15th century, Rana Sanga's sway over Rajputana became almost complete with the occupation of Ranthambhor and Chanderi. Further south, there were powerful Vijaynagar and Bahmani kingdoms (see Course EHI-03, Block 7). Towards the east, Nusrat Shah ruled Bengal.

Towards the closing years of Ibrahim Lodi's reign, Afghan chieftains Nasir Khan Lohani, Ma'ruf Farmuli, etc. succeeded in carving out separate kingdom of Jaunpur under Sultan Muhammad Shah. Besides these major powers, there were numerous Afghan chieftaincies around Agra — the most powerful ones being those of Hasan Khan in Mewar, Nizam Khan in Bayana, Muhammad Zaitun in Dholpur, Tatar Khan Sarang Khani in Gwalior, Husain Khan Lohani in Rapri. Qutub Khan in Etawa, Alam Khan in Kalpi, and Qasim Sambhali in Sambhal, etc.

While analysing the political set-up on the eve of Babur's invasion it is generally said (Rushbrooke William) that there was confederacy of Rajput principalities which was ready to seize the control of Hindustan. It is held that had Babur not intervened, the Rajputs led by their illustrious leader Rana Sanga would have captured power in northern India. It is argued that the political division of the regional states was religious in nature and that Rajput confederacy under Rana Sanga fired by religious zeal wanted to establish a Hindu Empire. This assumption is based on the famous passage of *Baburnama* where Babur says that Hindustan was governed by 'five Musalman rulers': the Lodis (at the centre), Gujarat, Malwa, Bahmani, and Bengal, and two 'pagans' (Rana Sanga of Mewar and Vijaynagar). Besides, the *fathnama* issued after the battle of Khanwa suggests that Rajput confederacy under Rana was inspired by religious zeal and organised with the intention to overthrow the "Islamic power".

However, such observations have been questioned by historians. Babur has nowhere suggested that these powers were antagonistic against each other on religious grounds. Instead, Babur himself admits that many *rais* and *ranas* were obedient to Islam. Moreover, if we see the composition of the confederacy, there were many Muslim chieftains like Hasan Khan Mewati, Mahmud Khan Lodi, etc. who side with Rana Sanga against Babur. Rather Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi (1560) blames Hasan Khan Mewati for creating the confederacy to overthrow the Mughal power in India. In fact, it was not Rana Sanga, but Sultan Mahmud who proclaimed himself the king of Delhi. Though, the power of Rana was unquestionable, Babur was more anxious of Afghan menace: thus the theory of religious consideration does not seem to hold ground.

### 5.3 CENTRAL ASIA AND BABUR

We have already discussed political formations in Central Asia and Persia during the 16th century in Unit 1. By the close of the 15th century, the power of the Timurids was on the decline. By this time the Uzbeks succeeded in establishing strong footholds in Transoxiana under Shaibani Khan. Around the same time, the Safavis rose into prominence under Shah Ismail in Iran; while further west the Ottoman Turks dominated the scene. We have already discussed how Shaibani Khan overran almost whole of Transoxiana and Khorasan. However, finally in 1510 Shah Ismail of Iran defeated Shaibani Khan. In a short while (1512) the Ottoman Sultan defeated Shah Ismail, thus leaving the stage again to the Uzbeks to become the master of the whole Transoxiana.

Babur ascended the throne at Farghana (a small principality in Transoxiana) in 1494 at the tender age of twelve. However, it was not a smooth succession for Babur. Both the Mongol Khans as well as the Timurid princes, specially Sultan Ahmad Mirza of Samarqand, an uncle of Babur, had interests in Farghana. Besides, Babur had to face the discontented nobility. Against all odds Babur struggled to strengthen his foothold in Central Asia and did succeed in taking Samarqand twice (1497, 1500). But he could hardly hold that for long. With Shaibani Khan's success over Khorasan (1507) the

Of the four Timurid centres of power finally sealed Babur's fate in Central Asia and he was left with no option but to look towards Kabul where the conditions were most favourable. Its ruler Ulugh Beg Mirza had already died (1501). Babur occupied Kabul in 1504. Yet Babur could not completely leave the dream to rule over Central Asia. With the help of Shah Ismail Safavi, he was able to control over Samarqand (1511) but Shah Ismail's defeat in 1512 and the resurgence of the Uzbeks left Babur with no alternative but to consolidate himself at Kabul.

Thus, it was the Central Asian situation which pressed and convinced (after 1512) Babur to abandon the hopes of creating an Empire in Central Asia and look towards India. The rich resources of India and the meagre income of Afghanistan, as Abul Fazl comments, might have been another attraction for Babur. The unstable political situation after Sikandar Lodi's death convinced him of political discontentment and disorder in the Lodi Empire. Invitations from Rana Sanga and Daulat Khan Lodi, the governor of Punjab, might have whetted Babur's ambitions. Perhaps Timur's legacy also provided some background for his invasion. (After the siege of Bhira in 1519, Babur asked Ibrahim Lodi to return western Punjab which belonged to his uncle Ulugh Beg Mizra.) Thus, Babur had both reasons and opportunity to look towards India.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Discuss the political condition of India on the eve of Babur's invasion.

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- 2) "It was Central Asian situation that forced Babur to look towards India".  
Comment.

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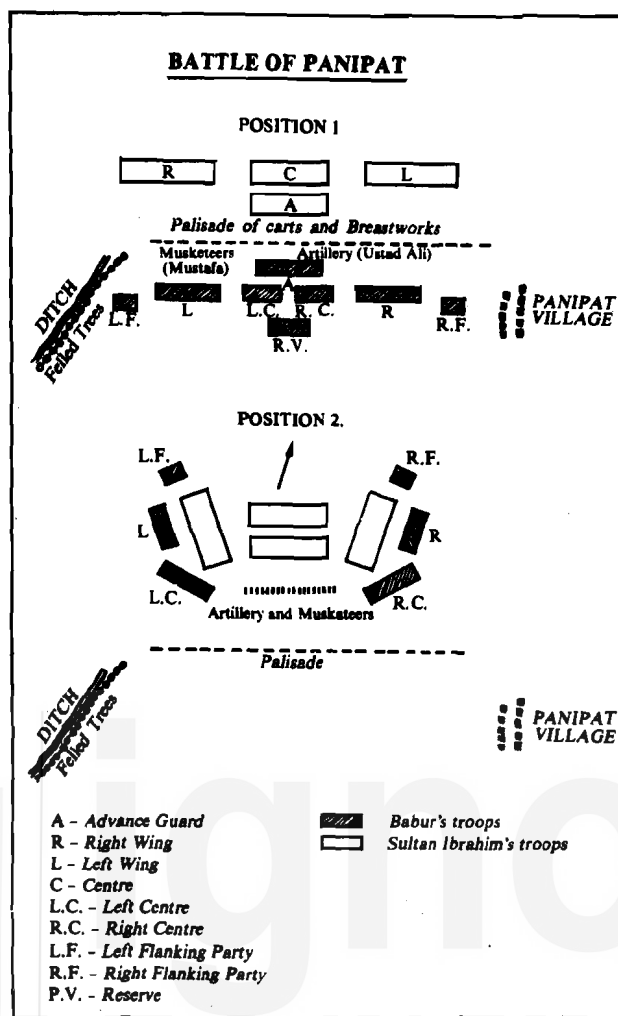
**5.4 FOUNDATION OF MUGHAL RULE IN INDIA**

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Much before the final showdown at the battle of Panipat (1526), Babur had invaded India four times. These skirmishes were trials of strength of Mughal arms and Lodi forces.

The first to fall was Bhira (1519-1520), the gateway of Hindustan, followed by Sialkot (1520) and Lahore (1524). Finally, Ibrahim Lodi and Babur's forces met at the historic battlefield of Panipat. The battle lasted for just few hours in favour of Babur. The battle shows Babur's skill in the art of warfare. His soldiers were less in number but the organisation was superior. Ibrahim's forces though many times greater in number (approximately 1,00,000 soldiers and 1000-500 elephants as compared to Babur's 12,000 horseman) fared badly. Babur successfully applied the Rumi (Ottoman) method of warfare (for details see chart given on next page).

As the Afghans advanced to attack the right flank; Babur ordered his reserve forces under Abdul Aziz to move. The Afghans, greater in number, were unable to move forward nor backward. They were attacked from both sides. This created total confusion among the Afghan forces. Babur took full advantage of the situation and his right and left wings soon attacked the Afghan forces from the rear side. This was followed with the opening up of fireshots. This completely paralysed the Afghan army. Afghan casualties reported by Babur were approximately 20,000 including the



Source: Rushbrooke Williams,  
An Empire Builder of the 16th Century. pp 130-131.

**Rumi device used by Babur at the battle of Panipat.**

Sultan Ibrahim Lodi. In the battle it was not Babur's artillery but his 'superb tactics' and the 'mounted archers' played the decisive role, a fact which Babur himself acknowledged.

The battle of Panipat, though, formally established the Mughal rule in India, it was first among the series of battles in the years to come. For example, to secure this triumph, it was equally important to overcome Rana Sanga of Mewar and the chieftains in and around Delhi and Agra. Another important opponent in the eastern India was the Afghans. To add to this, problems were mounting within his own nobility.

**5.4.1 Babur and the Rajput Kingdoms**

We have already discussed that Rana Sanga of Mewar was a power to reckon with. Babur, in his *Memoirs*, has blamed Rana Sanga for breaking his promise by not siding with him in the battle of Panipat against Ibrahim Lodi. Leaving apart the controversy whether it was Rana or Babur who asked for help, the fact remains that there was some understanding on both sides to join hands against Ibrahim Lodi in which the Rana faltered. Rana expected Babur to return to Kabul and leave him free to establish his hegemony, if not over whole of Hindustan, at least over Rajputana. Babur's decision to stay back must have given a big jolt to Rana's ambitions. Babur was also fully aware of the fact that it would be impossible for him to consolidate his position in India unless he shattered the Rana's power. Rana Sanga this time succeeded in establishing the confederacy against Babur with the help of Afghan nobles. Hasan Khan Mewati not only joined the Rana but also played a crucial role in forming the confederacy. This time (1527) Hasan Khan of Bari and Husain Khan Gurg-andaz joined the Rana. Husain Khan Nuhani occupied Rapri, Rustam Khan prevailed over Koil, while Qutub Khan captured Chandawar. Pressure of eastern Afghans was so much that Sultan Muhammad Duldai had to leave Qannauj and join Babur. To add to this, the defeat of Babur's commander Abdul Aziz and Muhibb Ali at Biana and their praise of the valour of the Rajput army completely demoralised

's army. Ferishta and Badauni (Akbar's contemporary) comment that "the sense of defeatism was so strong that it was proposed by a majority at a council of war that the Padshah should withdraw to Punjab and wait for developments or unseen events". The **Baburnama** does not say anything about such a proposal, but this shows the general feeling of "despair and frustration". However, Babur prevailed over the situation with his fiery speech touching the religious sentiments of his men. Babur fortified his position near Sikri at the village Khanwa. Here also he planned and organised his army on the 'Ottoman' lines. This time he took the support of a tank on his left, front side again was defended by carts but ropes were replaced by iron chains. However, this time he used the strong wooden tripods connected with each other by ropes. They offered not only protection and rest to the guns but also they could move them forward and backward on the wheels. It took around 20-25 days to complete the strategy under Ustad Mustafa and Ustad Ali. In the battle (17th March, 1527) Babur made use of his artillery well. Rana Sanga got severely wounded and was carried to Baswa near Amber. Among his other associates, Mahmud Khan Lodi escaped but Hasan Khan Mewati was killed. The Rajputs suffered a big loss. In fact, there was hardly any contingent whose commander was not killed. Shyamal Das (Vir Vinod) attributes treachery of Silhadi of Raisen as the major factor behind the defeat of Rana. But, in fact, it was irrational for Rana to remain inactive for over three weeks. This provided an opportunity to Babur to strengthen himself and prepare for war. Babur's disciplined army, mobile cavalry and his artillery played most decisive role in the battle.

Though the Mewar Rajputs received a great shock at Khanwa, Medini Rai at Malwa was still a power to reckon with. We have already discussed how in 1520 Rana Sanga bestowed Malwa on Medini Rai, the chief noble of Mahmud II of Malwa. In spite of great valour with which the Rajputs fought at Chanderi (1528), Babur faced little difficulty in overcoming Medini Rai. With his defeat, resistance across Rajputana was completely shattered. But Babur had to tackle the Afghans. Mahmud Khan Lodi who had already escaped towards the east could create problems if left unchecked.

#### 5.4.2 Babur and the Afghan Chieftains

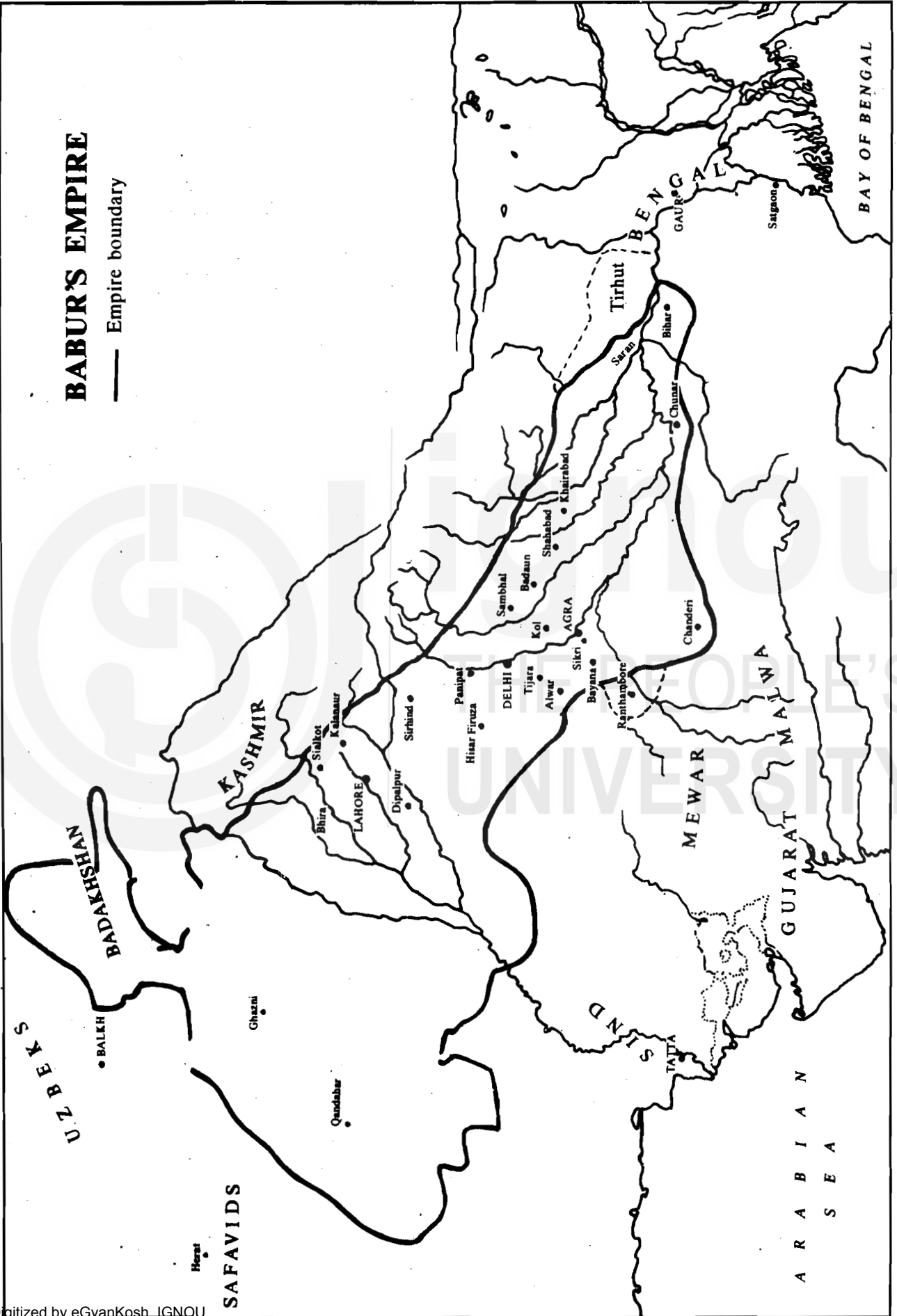
The Afghans had surrendered Delhi, but they were still powerful in the east (Bihar and parts of Jaunpur) where the Nuhani Afghans were dominant led by Sultan Muhammad Nuhani. The Afghans of Chunar, Jaunpur and Awadh were not ready to cooperate with the Nuhanis in a bid to give a united opposition against the Mughals. Instead, they surrendered meekly to Humayun (1527). In the meantime Sultan Muhammad Nuhani died (1528) and left the Nuhanis disjointed as his son Jalal Khan was still a minor. But the vacuum was soon filled by the appearance of Prince Mahmud Lodi, son of Sikandar Lodi and brother of Ibrahim. The Afghans, including the non-Nuhanis, who were a little hesitant earlier to side with the Nuhanis, now readily accepted Mahmud's leadership. Besides, even the Nuhani Afghans like Babban, Bayazid and Fath Khan Sarwani, etc. who felt leaderless with the desertion of Jalal to Bengal, welcomed Mahmud, Nusrat Shah of Bengal also, though apparently advocated friendship with Babur, secretly adopted hostile measures against him. He considered the existence of the Nuhani kingdom in Bihar as buffer between the Mughals and his own possessions in parts of Bihar.

Babur could hardly afford to ignore these developments. He mobilized his forces at Ghagra and inflicted a crushing defeat upon Nusrat Shah's army (1529). Thus ended the Afghan-Nusrat coalition and Nusrat Shah had to surrender large number of Afghan rebels who had taken asylum in his territory. The Afghans were now totally demoralized. Though Babban and Bayazid did attempt to resist at Awadh, but when pressurized (1529) they fled to Mahmud. Thus, within four years Babur succeeded in crushing the hostile powers and now could think of consolidating himself at Delhi. But he could hardly get the opportunity to rule as he died soon after (29 December, 1530).

The establishment of the Mughal Empire under the aegis of Babur was significant. Though the Afghans and Rajputs could not be crushed completely, a task left to his successors, his two major blows at Panipat and Khanwa were certainly decisive and destroyed the balance of power in the region and perhaps was a step towards the establishment of an all-India empire.

# BABUR'S EMPIRE

— Empire boundary



**Check Your Progress 2**

1) Discuss the significance of the battle of Khanwa.

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2) Write a note on Nusrat-Afghan coalition against Babur.

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**5.5 HUMAYUN : 1530-1540**

The situation under Humayun was quite different. Like Babur he did not command the respect and esteem of the nobility. Moreover, the Chaghatai nobles were not favourably inclined towards him and the Indian nobles, who had joined Babur's service, deserted the Mughals at Humayun's accession. Muhammad Sultan Mirza, a descendant of Timur; Muhammad Zaman and Mir Muhammad Mahdi Khwaja, brother-in-law of Babur, were considered worthy to aspire to the throne; especially Amir Nizamuddin Ali Khalifa, a grandee of Babur, hatched a conspiracy which failed. To sustain imperial power and hegemony, Humayun had to contend against the Afghans both in the east and the west which was supported by a large social base. But, most dangerous of all, was Humayun's brother Kamran Mirza. The situation was further aggravated by the existence of two centres of power within the empire — Humayun at the centre and Kamran's autonomous control over Afghanistan and Punjab. Humayun decided to deal, at first, with the western Afghans.

**5.5.1 Bahadur Shah and Humayun**

Humayun's relations with Bahadur Shah represent a curious contrast due to the circumstances. In the beginning (Jan. 1531 to mid 1533), Bahadur Shah assured Humayun of friendship and loyalty. But, at the same time he also attempted to expand his area of influence closer to Mughal frontiers. The first to taste the wrath was Malwa. Bahadur Shah was a little apprehensive of the Mughal designs on Malwa. He feared that if this buffer state between the two was left unoccupied, the Mughals might attempt to conquer it. Besides, all trade routes to Gujarat ports passed through Malwa. It was also very fertile and rich in grain production and Gujarat depended much upon this region for grain supply. After 1530, Bahadur Shah started putting up military pressure on Malwa and finally occupied it in Jan. 1531. Soon after, Bahadur Shah started making alliances with Humayun's adversaries in the east — Sher Shah in Bihar (1531-32) and Nusrat Shah in Bengal (Aug.-Sept. 1532). Nusrat Shah is also reported to have sent an embassy under Khwajasara Malik (Aug.-Sept. 1532) who was well received by Bahadur Shah. Besides, many disgruntled Afghans of the north and the east also joined him in a bid to oust Mughals in order to regain their lost pride. Sultan Alauddin Lodi, son of Bahlul Lodi, and his sons Fath Khan and Tatar Khan, Rai Nar Singh, nephew of Raja Bikramajit of Gwalior (1528) and Alam Khan Lodi of Kalpi (1531), all looked towards Bahadur Shah and extended their help against the Mughals. Even the eastern Afghans, Babban Khan Lodi (Shahu Khail), Malik Roop Chand, Dattu Sarwani and Ma'ru' Farmuli joined hands with Bahadur Shah.

Humayun could ill afford to ignore these developments. Situation could have worsened in case of combined Afghan attack from east and the west. In the meantime, Bahadur Shah's aggressive designs continued unabated. He occupied Bhilsa, Raisen, Ujjain and Gagraon. Thus he could well keep the Mughals away from Gwalior, Kalinjar, Bayana and Agra. While Bahadur Shah was busy in expanding

towards Malwa and Rajputana Humayun was besieging Chunar. These developments forced him to rush back to Agra (1532-33). But Bahadur Shah was keen to avoid any clash with the Mughals and immediately sent an embassy under Khurasan Khan (1533-34). Humayun demanded that he should not give shelter to Mughal rebels especially Muhammad Zaman Mirza. At the same time Humayun agreed not to threaten the Gujarati establishments while Bahadur Shah promised to withdraw from Mandu. Bahadur Shah in the meantime was involved in suppressing the Portuguese menace (Sept.-Dec. 1533) and Humayun was busy in tackling the Afghans in the east.

New developments resulted in the invasion of Gujarat by Humayun in 1535. In Jan. 1534 Bahadur Shah gave shelter to Muhammad Zaman Mirza and also attacked Chittor. Chittor was important for Bahadur Shah for it could provide him a strong base. It could have also facilitated expansion towards Ajmer, Nagor and Ranthambhor. But Humayun at this point made no attempt to stop Bahadur Shah from conquering Chittor. His move from Agra to Kalpi was too slow. Similarly, he took a longer route to reach Chittor. It seems that Humayun was not very keen to stop Bahadur Shah from occupying Chittor. Bahadur Shah was anxious to reach Mandu before Humayun could intercept. But the latter reached there much before. Mandu was the only route to retreat from Chittor to Gujarat and that was already occupied by Humayun. He blocked Bahadur Shah's camp from all directions thus cutting the supplies. Within a month, with no hope left, Gujarati army themselves destroyed their best artillery to stop the Mughals to use it against them. Bahadur Shah fled from Mandu to Champaner, Ahmedabad, Cambay and crossed Kathiawar and reached Diu. Mughals chased him. But, again, they hardly showed any eagerness for either arresting or killing Bahadur Shah. It seems that the real aim of Humayun was just to destroy the power of Gujarat. At Champaner, when Bahadur Shah was recognised by Mughal officers, they did not arrest him. Soon Humayun had to leave Mandu and rush to Agra because his long absence from there had resulted in rebellions in Doab and Agra. Mandu was now left under the charge of Mirza Askari. The handling of local population by the Mughals had caused widespread indignation. People were looted and slaughtered. As a result, as soon as Humayun left Mandu people rejoiced Bahadur Shah's return from Diu. Bahadur Shah took advantage of the opportunity and defeated the Mughals at Ahmedabad. In the meantime, to check the Portuguese advance, Bahadur Shah had to return to Diu. But this time the Portuguese succeeded and Bahadur Shah was treacherously murdered (17 Feb. 1537). This created confusion everywhere. The Afghans, left with no alternative, now turned towards Sher Shah for leadership.

### 5.5.2 Eastern Afghans and Humayun

The Afghans' defeat at the hands of Humayun (siege of Chunar November, 1531) resulted in the flight of Afghan nobles to Gujarat. This created a political vacuum in the east, providing an opportunity to Sher Khan to consolidate his power.

The period between 1530-35 proved crucial for Sher Shah. To consolidate his position in the east, he had to tackle with Bengal and Afghan nobles who got shelter under the Bengal ruler. On the otherhand, he was hardly in a position to face the Mughals in case of any direct clash. Fortunately circumstances took a favourable turn for Sher Shah. Considering Bahadur Shah of Gujarat a serious threat, Humayun decided to tackle him first. During this period Sher Shah was left free to consolidate himself.

Sher Shah had to face two invasions of Bengal rulers. The first attack took place under Qutub Khan, the *muqti* of Munger in 1532-33 during Sultan Nusrat Shah's reign, and, the second under Ibrahim Khan during Sultan Mahmud Shah's reign (1534). However, Bengal armies were defeated on both the occasions. These successes completely exposed the weakness of the Bengal army. This raised the prestige of Sher Khan. The eastern Afghans who had earlier deserted him now rushed to serve under his banner. Besides, the destruction and death of Bahadur Shah by Humayun left the Afghans with no alternative but to join him against the Mughals.

Now Sher Shah wanted to establish himself as the undisputed Afghan leader. This time (1535) he took the offensive and defeated the Bengal army in the battle of Surajgarh. In a peace settlement after the battle, Sultan Mahmud Shah of Bengal agreed to supply war elephants and financial help to Sher Shah whenever required. This grand success against Bengal, followed by his attacks on the Mughal territories in the east (from Gorakhpur to Banaras), alarmed Humayun. Humayun now deputed



Hindu Beg as governor (**hakim**) of Jaunpur to keep an eye on the developments in the eastern region. But, Sher Shah, acting cautiously on the one hand assured Hindu Beg of his loyalty, while on the other utilized the time for strengthening his army for his next onslaught on Mughals. As soon his preparations were over, he wrote a threatening letter to Hindu Beg. At the same time he launched his second attack on Bengal (1537). Hindu Beg, annoyed with Sher Shah's behaviour, reported his hostile intentions to Humayun. The Afghan nobles suggested Humayun to stop Sher Shah from occupying Bengal, while the Mughal nobles advised him to occupy Chunar first to use it as a base for his operations in the east. The latter option was important for maintaining the line of communications with Agra. But it took too long for Rumi Khan to capture Chunar (6 months). Historians consider it a great 'mistake' that cost Humayun his 'empire'. Though leaving Chunar in the hands of the Afghans could have been unwise, leaving Sher Shah free and unchecked in Bengal was 'equally wrong'. Sher Shah utilized the time and captured Gaur (April, 1538), the capital of Bengal.

At this stage, Humayun asked Sher Shar to transfer Bengal and Rohtasgarh to him, but Sher Shah was not ready to surrender Bengal and the negotiations failed. Now Humayun decided to curb Sher Shah's power but he did not want to involve himself in Bengal politics. Yet, the circumstances were forcing him towards it. Sher Shah shrewdly withdrew from Bengal, and Humayun, with no obvious obstructions, reached Bengal (September, 1538).

He had to stay there for four months until he finally settled the prevailing chaos. In the meantime Sher Shah succeeded in controlling the routes to Agra thus making communication difficult for Humayun, To add to Humayun's worries, Hindal Mirza, who was sent to gather supplies for his army, assumed sovereign power. Humayun hurried back to Chunar and reached Chausa (March 1539). He encamped on the western side of the river Karmnasa. At this stage Humayun was still in control of the situation. On the front side he was guarded by the river, while to his rear was Chunar, which was still in the hands of his men. Sher Shah, too, showed willingness to accept truce. But at this stage Humayun unnecessarily exposed himself to danger by crossing the river. Sher Shah knowing fully well the paucity of Humayun's provisions, equipment and transport wasted no time in exploiting the situation. He, while pretending to fulfil the terms of the truce, attacked the Mughal army. Panic spread in the Mughal camp. Large number of Mughal forces were killed. Humayun and Askari Mirza managed to flee. Humayun reached Agra by way of Kara Manikpur and Kalpi (July 1539). Raja Virbhan, the ruler of Gahora, helped greatly in rescuing them. Kamran Mirza welcomed Humayun on his return to Agra with his army totally destroyed; while Sher Shah, elated by his victory, proclaimed himself an independent king. Under these circumstances, the final clash was inevitable. Humayun was defeated badly in the battle of Qannauj the banks of Ganga (1540). This paved the way for the establishment of the second Afghan empire in India. A number of factors had contributed in Humayun's debacle against Sher Shah. These include:

- i) He faced hostility of his brothers. On many occasions he dealt with them too kindly.
- ii) Sometime he reacted lethargically when the situation demanded swift action. This can be seen well in his Gujarat and Bengal campaigns.
- iii) He was also victim of an 'inexorable fate'. For example Mahmud Shah of Bengal kept him unnecessarily involved in Bengal politics. This provided an opportunity to Sher Shah to gain strength.
- iv) Humayun also lacked financial resources for continuous warfare. This weakness became very much evident when in Bengal he got stranded and lacked money and supplies (1539).
- v) Besides, Sher Shah had the courage, experience and organising abilities; he was also skilled in exploiting political opportunities. Humayun could not match his capabilities.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss in brief Humayun's struggle with Bahadur Shah.

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 2) Discuss the factors responsible for Humayun's debacle against Sher Shah.

3) Match the following:

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|----------------------------|------|
| i) first battle of Panipat | 1528 |
| ii) battle of Chausa       | 1527 |
| iii) battle of Qannauj     | 1539 |
| iv) battle of Khanwa       | 1526 |
| v) battle of Chanderi      | 1540 |

### 5.5.3 Humayun and His Brothers

Immediately after the death of his father Babur, Humayun divided his empire into four parts giving Mewat to Hindal, Sambhal to Askari and Punjab, Kabul and Qandahar to Kamran. The very division itself was unfavourable to Humayun for he was left with little resources at his disposal. In spite of this kind treatment, his brothers hardly helped him when he needed. His brother Askari Mirza, whom Humayun made governor of Gujarat at the time of Bahadur Shah's attack on Ahmedabad, could not tackle the situation. As a result Humayun had to lose Malwa (1537). Askari Mirza also sided with Kamran and proceeded to Qandahar at the crucial juncture when Humayun needed their help after his defeat at the hands of Sher Shah at Qannauj. However, Hindal Mirza by and large remained loyal to Humayun and even died fighting for him (1551).

The greatest threat to Humayun arose from Kamran Mirza who had assumed almost a semi-independent position in Afghanistan and Punjab. Thus emerged two centres of power — one at Lahore and the other at Agra. This situation prevented the rise of a centralised state and the political instability was evident in the first major crisis which the Mughals faced (1538-1540). Though Kamran Mirza remained loyal to Humayun in early years and once rushed to Delhi at the call of Yadgar Nasir Mirza (governor of Delhi) to tackle Hindal Mirza (June 1539). Here again, instead of marching towards Chausa to help Humayun, both the brothers, Hindal and Kamran, watched the developments from a distance. Had they extended help to Humayun, he could have defeated Sher Shah.

It seems Kamran was more interested in defending his own territory rather than putting up a united front against the Afghans. Even before Humayun's final clash with Sher Shah (1540), Kamran Mirza, instead of sending his whole army, sent only 3000 troops to serve the Emperor at Lahore. After Humayun's defeat at the hands of Sher Shah (1540), Kamran even sent a proposal to Sher Shah, through Qazi Abdullah, to accept Punjab as the frontier between the two, Sher Shah realised that

is no unanimity between the brothers and forced them to accept Indus as the boundary. Kamran felt that he had to lose Punjab due to the incompetency of his brother and became more anxious to save Kabul and Qandahar for himself. The period between 1545-1553 is one during which Humayun was busy in dealing with Kamran Mirza (see *infra*). However, it is difficult to put the entire blame for Humayun's failures on his brothers. But their support would have made things easier for Humayun and the Empire could have been saved.

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## 5.6 ESTABLISHMENT OF SECOND AFGHAN EMPIRE IN INDIA: 1540-1555

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After defeating the Mughal Emperor, Sher Shah declared himself as the sovereign ruler and started building the Second Afghan Empire. The fifteen years (1540-1555) of Afghan rule form an interlude in the history of Mughal Empire. This period, nevertheless, was significant for the administrative innovations and reorganisation. The process of consolidation under Sher Shah would be discussed in Blocks 4 and 5. During his short reign (1540-1545), he was busy in fighting for keeping his new Empire intact. Here we will give a very brief account of Sher Shah's conflicts during this period.

The Ghakkars, (inhabitants on the North-West frontier between the Indus and Jhelum rivers) were the first one to come in conflict with him. But Sher Shah got very little success in this venture. The Ghakkars put up a stiff resistance. Khizr Khan, the governor of Bengal, also showed some signs of independence. All this forced him to withdraw from Punjab and marched towards Bengal (1541). There he dismissed Khizr Khan. Malwa was the next target of Sher Shah where Qadir Shah showed disobedience. On this way he occupied Gwalior from Abdul Qasim. Qadir Shah also surrendered and was arrested (1542). To tackle the Rajputs, Sher Shah besieged Raisen in 1543. Raja Puran Mal, ruler of Raisen, though offered submission, Sher Shah attacked him. Puran Mal along with many others died in the battle.

The province of Multan was also conquered in 1543. In spite of the defeat of the Rajputs at Raisen, Maldeo of Marwar was still formidable. He had already extended his dominion towards Sambhar, Nagor, Bikaner, Ajmer and Bednar. Sher Shah marched towards him and in 1544 occupied Ajmer, Pali and Mount Abu. Without any serious resistance, Udai Singh also handed over the keys of Chittor to Sher Shah. Thus, almost the whole of Rajputana fell into his hands. Sher Shah also succeeded in occupying the impregnable fort of Kalinjar, but, while besieging it, Sher Shah was severely wounded on account of explosion and died soon after (22 May 1545). Thus ended the glorious career of Sher Shah.

Sher Shah's son and successor Islam Shah (1545-1553), though kept the legacy of his father intact, failed to consolidate it any further. He was most of the time busy in suppressing the intrigues within his own camp which emerged under the leadership of his brother Adil Shah along with Azam Humayun and Khawwas Khan. Besides, his humiliating treatment towards the Niyazi Afghans specifically and the Afghans in general generated more resentment rather than gaining any support. The ill effects of which had to be borne by his son and successor. One finds that in spite of all efforts of Islam Shah to clear the road for the smooth succession of his son after his death (1553) internal strifes marred the infant Afghan kingdom to the advantage of Humayun. Soon after Islam Shah's death, Mubariz Khan murdered Islam's son Feroz and ascended the throne with the title of Adil Shah. Sedition and rebellions marred the entire country and the Empire broke into 'five' kingdoms (Ahmad Khan Sur in Punjab; Ibrahim Shah in Sambhal and Doab; Adil Shah in Chunar and Bihar; Malwa under Baz Bahadur; and Sikandar Shah controlled Delhi and Agra). This provided an ideal climate for Humayun to strike.

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## 5.7 REVIVAL OF MUGHAL RULE IN INDIA

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After Humayun's defeat at Qannauj, when Askari Mirza and Kamran withdrew to the North-West; Hindal and Yadgar Nasir Mirza decided to be with Humayun. The latter now decided to try his luck in Sind. But, here, Hindal Mirza also deserted him and at the invitation of Kamran marched towards Qandahar. The ruler of Sind, Shah Husain Arghun, also succeeded in winning over Yadgar Nasir Mirza by giving his

daughter in marriage. Humayun himself could not succeed in his bid to occupy Sihwan. Frustrated by all these developments, Humayun alone tried his luck in Rajputana. He was invited by Raja Maldeo, the ruler of Marwar (July 1542). But, at this juncture, Sher Shah asked Maldeo to hand over Humayun. The latter fled in fear (August 1542). He was well received by Rana Birsal. With the help of the Rana Humayun tried his luck in Sind once more but failed. Now he marched towards Persia via Ghazni (December 1543) where he was well-received by Shah Tahmasp (1544). The latter promised him in regaining Qandahar, Kabul and Ghazni provided he promised to surrender Qandahar to the Shah. It was agreed upon and Qandahar, then under Askari Mirza, was occupied and handed over to the Shah. But misunderstandings crept up, for the Persians showed no eagerness to help Humayun to occupy Kabul and Ghazni. This compelled Humayun to wrest Qandahar from the Persians (1545). Humayun's success at Qandahar won over many nobles — specially Hindal and Yadgar Nasir Mirza to change sides. These developments totally demoralized Kamran and he fled from Kabul to Ghazna and thence to Sind and thus facilitated Humayun's entry in Kabul (November 1545). From 1545 to 1553, Humayun spent his energies mainly in dealing with his brother Kamran who kept Humayun on his toes. In this conflict Hindal Mirza lost his life on the battlefield (1551). This forced Humayun to have a final showdown. Kamran, tried to get help from Islam Shah but was cold shouldered. While fleeing from place to place, the Ghakkar chieftain Sultan Adam captured Kamran and handed him over to Humayun. Finally, Kamran was blinded and permitted to proceed to Mecca (where he died in 1557).

With the end of Kamran's opposition, Humayun emerged an undisputed master of Kabul. With favourable political climate in India (see *supra*), now Humayun could systematically plan for the re-acquisition of his lost Indian Empire. He started in November 1554 and reached Lahore in Feb. 1555. With little difficulty, the Mughals continued their victorious march and occupied Machhiwara. The final clash took place at Sirhind. Sikandar Shah Sur had to flee towards the Siwalik and the road to Delhi was thus lay clear. Humayun reached Salimgarh in June 1555 and occupied Delhi. However, Humayun could hardly accomplish the task of conquest and consolidation. He died soon after (26 January 1556) leaving behind his minor son Akbar under heavy odds.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Write a short note on Humayun's relations with his brothers.

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- 2) Discuss the circumstances which facilitated Humayun to regain his power in India.

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## 5.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have studied the political situation of India on the eve of Babur's invasion. It would not be fair to assume that Indian politics was determined by religious considerations; rather circumstances and personal interests dominated the political scene. But, even after Panipat, Babur's path was not smooth. He had to face the Rajput chieftains and the dispirited Afghans. The alliances that were forged during these conflicts cut across religious considerations. We have seen that the confederacy had in it both the Rajputs and the Afghan nobles. It was Babur's great

ralship that made him victorious against all odds. His son Humayun, who was not as gifted a general as his father, could not stand against the united Afghan opposition and thus failed to keep his father's legacy intact (1540). As a result, he was thrown into wilderness for almost thirteen years. During this period we saw the emergence of a great Afghan — Sher Shah—who, though ruled for just five years, left his permanent marks of excellence in history. He not only provided a strong administrative setup (Blocks 4 and 5), which was followed and further strengthened by Akbar, but also brought almost the whole of north India under one administrative unit. But his successors failed to consolidate further. Their personal intrigues and the prevailing chaos provided an apt opportunity to Humayun to strike. This time Humayun made no mistake. He regained power in 1555. He died soon after leaving the task of consolidation to his son Akbar.

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## 5.9 KEY WORDS

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**Infra** : text to be followed

**Muqti** : governor; **iqta** holder

**Supra** : text mentioned earlier

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## 5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss briefly the ruling powers in India; their relationship with each other; also mention how their personal interests, court intrigues, etc. weakened their power to the advantage of Babur (see Section 5.2).
- 2) Discuss the Uzbeks and the Persians; their interests particularly in Farghana and Central Asia in general. How Shaibani Khan's defeat provided opportunity to the Uzbeks to strengthen their hold in Central Asia (see Section 5.3).

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Mention how battle of Khanwa proved the turning point and not that of Panipat; the Rajputs' debacle did not make Babur's task easier (see Sub-section 5.4.1).
- 2) After the defeat of the Nuhani Afghans in Bihar, they were given asylum by Nusrat Shah that compelled Babur to tackle him firmly (see Sub-section 5.4.2).

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Apart from briefly giving political details, highlight the point that on many occasions, Humayun reacted too slow to the situation that proved fatal to him (see Sub-section 5.5.2).
- 2) Discuss how Humayun's character, Hindal's attitude and the opportunistic strategies of Sher Shah were responsible for Humayun's failures (see Sub-section 5.5.2).
- 3) i) 1526 ii) 1539 iii) 1540 iv) 1527 v) 1528

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See Sub-section 5.5.3.
- 2) Discuss how Humayun could overcome his brother Mirza Kamran in Kabul. In the meantime how circumstances also changed in India. Sher Shah's successors proved incapable in keeping intact Sher Shah's legacy and Humayun took full advantage of the situation (see Section 5.6; 5.7)

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# UNIT 6 EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION: 1556-1707

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## Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Power Politics and Regency of Bairam Khan : 1556-1560
- 6.3 Territorial Expansion
  - 6.3.1 North and Central India
  - 6.3.2 Western India
  - 6.3.3 Eastern India
  - 6.3.4 Rebellions of 1581
  - 6.3.5 Conquests in the North-West
  - 6.3.6 Deccan and South
- 6.4 Administrative Reorganisation
- 6.5 Territorial Expansion under the Successors of Akbar
- 6.6 Policies Towards Autonomous Chieftains
- 6.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit. You would learn about:

- how Bairam Khan's regency came to an end and Akbar took control of the affairs of the state;
- the territorial expansion of Mughal Empire under Akbar and his successors;
- the problems faced by the Mughals in expanding the Empire;
- the formation of provinces under Akbar; and
- the relationship between the Mughals and autonomous chiefs and appreciate how did it help in the expansion and consolidation of the Empire.

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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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Humayun had rescued and restored the Mughal Empire in 1555. But, had it not been for Akbar, the Empire perhaps would not have sustained. It was during his rule that the Mughal Empire became a political fact and an important factor in Indian politics. Akbar's policies were emulated by his successors with few changes or as suited the political atmosphere of their times.

In this Unit we will not go into the details of administrative machinery and the creation of the ruling class. This we will discuss in Block 4. Here we will confine ourselves mainly to the territorial expansion and the problems related to it. In the course of developing a large Empire the Mughal rulers had to deal with some political powers who held sway in various regions. Important of these were the Rajputs and the rulers to the south of the Vindhyas like Bijapur, Golkonda and Ahmadnagar and the Marathas. We will study this aspect in detail in Block 3.

We begin this unit with Akbar's efforts to get rid of his adversaries and to establish himself at the helm of affairs at the Mughal court. Let us take up Bairam Khan's regency.

At Humayun's death, Akbar was only thirteen years old. It was his tutor and Humayun's confidant, Bairam Khan, who served as the regent from 1556-1560. The period of Bairam Khan's regency could be divided into four phases: The first was from the accession of Akbar to before the second battle of Panipat; i.e., January-October 1556. This was a period when the nobles accepted Bairam Khan's leadership to protect their interests. The second phase was marked by the second battle of Panipat and the arrival of the royal ladies (Hamida Banu Begum and Maham Anaga) in India. During this period, Bairam Khan was in absolute control of the state affairs. He attempted to create a personal following. In the third phase, which lasted till mid-1559, Bairam Khan's influence and power declined. The last phase witnessed the attempts of Bairam Khan to regain control. There was also growth of factional strife which ultimately led to the dismissal of Bairam Khan.

Politically, the first phase was insecure. It saw not only Humayun's death but also a challenge to the Empire by the Afghan forces under Hemu. The events especially cast a gloom since Akbar was a minor. The only alternative to save the situation was to appoint a regent. But the fear was that the exercise of *de facto* sovereignty by one of the nobles as regent would disrupt the mutual relations of the nobles and threaten the administration. Despite these fears, Bairam Khan was appointed *wakil*. Surprisingly, there was no opposition to the appointment even by those nobles who could claim *wikalat* either on the basis of long service, blood relationship or past association with Akbar. These included even the most severe critics of Bairam Khan.

While accepting Bairam Khan as the regent, it appears that these nobles wanted to share power and influence with Bairam Khan. Bairam Khan, on the other hand, was determined to exercise power rigidly. On the assumption of the office as *wakil-us Sultanat*, he expected factional conflict and tussle for power. He, therefore, began the process of eliminating all those nobles who would challenge him. He dismissed and imprisoned Shah Abul Ma'ali, his ardent critic. This did not arouse much opposition since Ma'ali was generally unpopular among the nobles.

Subsequently, all such nobles who posed a challenge to Bairam Khan were sent to Kabul. Bairam Khan, however, attempted to win the support of Mun'im Khan, the governor of Kabul and Ali Quli Khan Uzbek, the commander of the Mughal forces in Awadh. Bairam Khan did not trust Mun'im Khan. He wanted to confine him to Kabul and distance him from the court. The opportunity came in May 1556 when Mirza Sulaiman attacked Kabul. Mun'im Khan's contacts were delinked with the court for the next four months and Bairam Khan used this period to strengthen his power at the court.

Tensions were developing in the nobility and it was on the verge of crisis by the second battle of Panipat. The imperial forces led by Tardi Beg failed to defend themselves against the Afghan forces at the battle of Tughlaqabad. At this juncture, trying to assert himself, Bairam Khan, without the sanction of the emperor, ordered the execution of Tardi Beg on charges of treachery. This aroused dissensions in the nobility. But the victory at Panipat revived Bairam Khan's power. He further strengthened his position by distributing titles and *jagirs* in the Doab and granting promotions and rewards to his loyalists. He also gave important positions to his favourites. Pir Muhammad Khan was appointed his personal *wakil*, Khwaja Aminuddin as *bakshi* and Shaikh Gadai as *sadr*.

Bairam Khan was virtually in complete control of the affairs within six months of Tardi Beg's execution. To vest considerable power in himself, he prevented access to the king especially that of his possible rivals. Mun'im Khan and Khwaja Jalaluddin Mahmud were sent away to Kabul and were not allowed to come to the court. The strengthening of Bairam Khan's power and the exercise of *de facto* authority by him was resented by the nobility.

The first evident decline in Bairam Khan's power was when Akbar was married to the daughter of Mirza Abdullah Mughal, a son-in-law of Mun'im Khan despite

Bairam Khan's resistance. Bairam Khan's position was also affected after the arrival of Hamida Banu Begum from Kabul in April 1557. She was accompanied by Maham Anaga who had earlier supported Bairam Khan in the event of Tardi Beg's execution.

Bairam Khan was compelled to compromise on the functioning of the Central government, i.e., he had to share power with leading nobles. Bairam Khan as **wakil** could not place any proposal before the king without the consent of leading nobles. This compromise diminished his power and by 1558 even his personal **wakil**, Pir Muhammad, turned against him.

To regain his power, he attempted a coup in 1559. He replaced Pir Muhammad by Muhammad Khan Sistani as his personal **wakil**. Shaikh Gadai was given additional charge apart from being a **sadr**. Many small ranking officials were also given promotions. But Bairam Khan remained isolated from the large section of the nobility and the king. He aroused their resentment by his authoritarianism.

Scholars like R.P. Tripathi, have accused Bairam Khan of granting favours to the shias to the disadvantage of the sunnis and thus annoying them. But I.A. Khan argues that although Bairam Khan was a shia, there is no historical evidence to prove that he granted favours on religious grounds. In fact, Bairam Khan's favourite Shaikh Gadai, the **sadr** was a Sunni and not a Shia.

Bairam Khan had underestimated the shrewdness of Akbar. He had made no attempt to win the confidence of the king and when the king announced his dismissal in March 1560, all the loyalists of Bairam Khan either supported the king or declared their neutrality.

The study of the period of Bairam Khan's regency indicates that actually the political power was vested in the nobility. The nobles accepted the authority of Bairam Khan in a limited sense. They were not willing to accept his de facto sovereign power.

Bairam Khan tried to curb the nobility but he failed to acquire absolute power. To maintain his position, he had to depend on one or the other section of the nobility. Thus he failed to acquire a stable independent following. In fact, he alienated large sections of the nobility by giving high ranks and promotions to junior officers and creating inefficient **amirs**. At the end of his career, Bairam Khan realised that even his favourites opposed him.

The tussle between Bairam Khan and the nobility was in fact a conflict between the central authority represented by the regent and the nobility. The king during this period was a mere figurehead who often became a tool in the hands of Bairam Khan's opponents. Bairam Khan had tried to weld together the two main groups of the Mughal nobility, i.e., the Chaghatai and Khurasani. But most of the nobles regarded this as an attempt by the regent to curb their power and independence. Even the loyalists of Bairam Khan realised that they could not accept the central authority as represented by Bairam Khan.

Bairam Khan's regency was a period of dilemma for him. While he wanted to curtail the independence of the nobility, he needed their support for his power. This created contradictions in his position throughout this period. It was not possible for him to counterbalance this opposition by introducing a new group. The Afghans could not be recruited because they were the main contenders to the throne. The only alternatives were, therefore, the Rajput chiefs, the **zamindars** or other local chiefs. But, inducting them would have been a long process. Thus, whenever, Bairam Khan tried to recover his position, he was opposed by the court nobility. Consequently, he often found himself isolated and was ultimately overthrown.

Bairam Khan's exit confirmed the struggle between the central authority and the forces against it in the Mughal polity. It resulted in the triumph of the latter. This trend would help to understand the difficulties which Akbar faced with his nobility between 1562-1567 after he assumed complete sovereign powers.

We notice that throughout Bairam Khan's regency, political power rested with the dominant section of the nobility which consisted of the Chaghatais and other groups of Turani origin. Bairam Khan was able to exercise power as the regent as long as



they supported him. The nobles, as mentioned earlier, accepted Bairam Khan in a limited sense and not as a de facto sovereign. They did not oppose him till the Afghans were crushed. But after Hemu's defeat in the second battle of Panipat, they resisted the regent's efforts at centralisation and forced him to accept the authority of the leading nobles.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) How did Bairam Khan deal with the initial challenges to his power?

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2) Explain the revival of Bairam Khan's power after the second battle of Panipat.

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3) Discuss the decline in Bairam Khan's position subsequent to 1557.

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**6.3 TERRITORIAL EXPANSION**

After overcoming initial problems and consolidating his hold on the throne, Akbar started a policy of extending Mughal territories. Any policy of expansion meant conflict with various political powers spread in different parts of the country. A few of these political powers were well organised, the Rajputs, though spread throughout the country as autonomous chiefs and kings, had major concentration in Rajputana. The Afghans held political control mainly in Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal. In Deccan and South India, the major states were Khandesh, Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Golkonda and other southern kingdoms. In the North-west some tribes held their sway. Kabul and Qandahar, though held by Mughal factions, were opposed to Akbar.

Akbar through a systematic policy started the task of expanding his Empire. It must be noted that the major expansion of Mughal Empire took place during the reign of Akbar. During the reigns of his successors (Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb), very little was added in terms of territory. The main additions in the later period were made during Aurangzeb's reign in South India and North-East (Assam).

**6.3.1 North and Central India**

The first expedition was sent to capture Gawaliar and Jaunpur in 1559-60. After a brief war, Ram Shah surrendered the Gawaliar fort. Khan Zaman was sent to Jaunpur ruled by Afghans who were defeated easily and it was annexed to the Mughal Empire.

Malwa in central India was ruled by Baz Bahadur. Adham Khan and others led the expedition against Malwa. Baz Bahadur was defeated and fled towards Burhanpur.

Next, Garh Katanga or Gondwana, an independent state in central India ruled by Rani Durgawati, widow of Dalpat Shah, was conquered in 1564. Later, in 1567, Akbar handed over the kingdom to Chandra Shah, the brother of Dalpat Shah.

During this period Akbar had to face a series of revolts in central India. Abdullah Khan Uzbek was the leader of the revolt. He was joined by a number of Uzbeks.

Khan Zaman and Asaf Khan also rebelled. Akbar with the help of Munim Khan succeeded in suppressing them and consolidated his position.

A long conflict with nobility, which had started after the dismissal of Bairam Khan (1560), now came to an end. Akbar through his diplomatic skills, organisational capabilities and the help of some trusted friends tackled this serious crisis.

### 6.3.2 Western India

#### Conquest of Rajputana

Akbar realised that to have a stable Empire, he must subjugate the large tracts under Rajput kings in the neighbouring region of Rajputana. A calculated policy was devised not only to conquer these areas but turn their rulers into allies. Here we will not go into the details of Akbar's policy towards the Rajput kings. You would study the details in Unit 11 of Block 3. Akbar with the exception of Chittor's Rana Pratap, managed to secure the allegiance of all the Rajput kingdoms. A large number of them were absorbed in Mughal nobility and helped Akbar in expanding and consolidating the Mughal Empire.



Raja Surjan Hada surrendering the Keys of Ranthambhor fort to Akbar.

#### Conquest of Gujarat

Having consolidated his position in Central India and Rajputana, Akbar turned towards Gujarat in 1572. After Humayun's withdrawal, Gujarat was no longer a unified kingdom. There were various warring principalities. Gujarat, apart from being a fertile region, had a number of busy ports and thriving commercial centres.

Sultan Muzaffer Shah III was the nominal king claiming overlordship over 7 warring principalities. One of the princes, I'timad Khan, had invited Akbar to come and conquer it. Akbar himself marched to Ahmedabad. The town was captured without any serious resistance. Surat with a strong fortress offered some resistance but was also captured. In a short time most of the principalities of Gujarat were subdued.

Akbar organised Gujarat into a province and placed it under Mirza Aziz Koka and returned to capital. Within six months various rebellious groups came together and revolted against the Mughal rule. The leaders of rebellion were Ikhtiyarul Mulk and Mohammad Husain Mirza. The Mughal governor had to cede a number of territories.



Victory of Surat : Akbar entering the city

On receiving the news of rebellion in Agra, Akbar started for Ahmedabad. This march is considered as one of the most outstanding feats of Akbar. Travelling at a speed of 50 miles a day Akbar along with a small force reached Gujarat within 10 days and suppressed the rebellion.

For almost a decade there was peace in Gujarat. Meanwhile, Muzaffar III escaped from captivity and took refuge in Junagadh. After 1583 he tried to organise a few rebellions.

### 6.3.3 Eastern India

Ever since the defeat of Humayun at the hands of Sher Shah, Bengal and Bihar were governed by Afghans. In 1564, Sulaiman Karrani the governor of Bihar, brought Bengal also under his rule. Sulaiman realising the growing strength of Akbar had acknowledged the overlordship of the Mughals. He used to send presents to Akbar. After his death in 1572, followed by some infighting, his younger son Daud came to occupy his throne. Daud refused to acknowledge Mughal suzerainty and got engaged in conflict with the Mughal governor of Jaunpur.

In 1574, Akbar along with Mun'im Khan Khan-i Khanan marched towards Bihar. In a short time, Hajipur and Patna were captured and Daud fled towards Garhi. After a brief stay Akbar returned. Mun'im Khan and Raja Todar Mal continued to chase Daud who later submitted to the Mughals. After a short time, he again rebelled and was finally killed by the Mughal forces under Khan-i Jahan and Gaur (Bengal) was taken. This ended the independent rule of Bengal in 1576 which had lasted with few



Akbar's success against Bengal: Daud Shah is taken Prisoner

interruptions, for almost two centuries. Parts of Orissa were still under some Afghan Cheifs. Around 1592, Mansingh brought the whole of Orissa under the Mughal rule.

#### 6.3.4 Rebellions of 1581

According to V.A. Smith, "The year 1581 may be regarded as the most critical time in the reign of Akbar, if his early struggle to consolidate his power be not taken into account."

After the conflict of nobility which had lasted till 1567, now again serious conflicts came to the surface in Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat and in the north-west. At the root was the discomfort of Afghans who were overthrown everywhere by the Mughals. Apart from this, Akbar's policy of strict administration of **jagirs** was also responsible for this. By this new policy the **jagirdars** were asked to submit the accounts of their **jagirs** and a cut was enforced in military expenditure. The governor of Bengal enforced these regulations ruthlessly, giving rise to revolt. Soon the rebellion spread to Bihar. Masum Khan Kabuli, Roshan Beg, Mirza Sharfuddin and Arab Bahadur were the main leaders of rebels. Muzaffer Khan, Rai Purshottam and other imperial officers tried to crush the rebellion but failed. Akbar immediately sent a large force under Raja Todar Mal and Shaikh Farid Bakshi. A little later Aziz Koka and Shahbaz Khan were also sent to help Todar Mal. Meanwhile, the rebels declared Akbar's brother Hakim Mirza, who was in Kabul, as their king. The Mughal forces crushed the rebellion in Bihar, Bengal and adjoining regions. A few rebel leaders escaped and took shelter in the forest region of Bengal. They had lost all following but for a few years they continued to harass Mughal officers with their small bands without much success.

Mirza Hakim, to put greater pressure on Akbar, attacked Lahore. Akbar also marched towards Lahore. Hakim Mirza, after hearing the news of Akbar's march, immediately retreated. Hakim Mirza was expecting a number of Mughal officers to join him but all his calculations failed. Akbar after organising the defence of North West frontier, sent an army to Kabul. Akbar also marched towards it. By the time he reached there Hakim Mirza had left Kabul and Akbar occupied it. Akbar gave the charge of Kabul to his sister Bakhtunnisa Begam and left for Agra (1581). After some time, Mirza Hakim came back and continued to rule in his sister's name. Mirza Hakim died after four years and Raja Man Singh was appointed governor of Kabul.

Gujarat also witnessed some rebellion at around the same time when Bihar, Bengal and North-West regions were in trouble. Here the ex-ruler Muzaffar Shah escaped from captivity and organised a small force. He started attacking the Mughal territories in Gujarat. I'timad Khan was deputed as governor of Gujarat. Nizamuddin Ahmed in the capacity of **bakshi** helped him in his operations against the rebels. In 1584 Muzaffar Shah was defeated at Ahmedabad and Nandod. He escaped towards the Kutch region. Nizamuddin Ahmed followed him there also. In the whole of Kutch region a number of forts were erected and Mughal officers were appointed. Muzaffar kept brewing some trouble in that region till 1591-92 when he was finally captured.

### 6.3.5 Conquests in the North-West

After the death of Hakim Mirza, Kabul was annexed and given to Raja Man Singh in **jagir**. At around the same time, Akbar decided to settle the various rebellions in the North-West Frontier region and conquer new areas.

#### Suppression of the Roshanais

The first to attract Akbar's attention was the Roshanai movement. Roshanai was a sect established by a soldier who was called Pir Roshanai in the frontier region. He had a large following. After his death his son Jalala became the head of the sect. The Roshanais rebelled against the Mughals and cut the road between Kabul and Hindustan. Akbar appointed Zain Khan as commander of a strong force to suppress the Roshanais and establish Mughal control in the region. Sayid Khan Gakhar and Raja Birbal were also sent with separate forces to assist Zain Khan. In one of the operations Birbal was killed with most of his forces (around 8 thousand). Subsequently, Zain Khan was also defeated but he could survive to reach Akbar at the fort of Atak. Akbar was greatly shocked by the death of Birbal, one of his most favourite companions. Akbar appointed Raja Todar Mal with strong force to capture the region. Raja Man Singh was also asked to help in the task. The combined efforts of the two yielded success and the Roshanais were defeated.

**Conquest of Kashmir:** Akbar for a long time had his eyes set on conquering Kashmir. While camping in Atak, he decided to despatch an army for the conquest of Kashmir under Raja Bhagwan Das and Shah Quli Mahram. Yusuf Khan, the king of Kashmir, was defeated and he accepted suzerainty of Mughals. Akbar was not very pleased with the treaty as he wanted to annex Kashmir. Yusuf's son Yaqub along with a few **amirs** also decided to oppose the Mughals and waged war. But some desertions set in the Kashmiri forces. Finally, the Mughals emerged victorious and Kashmir was annexed to the Mughal Empire in 1586.

**Conquest of Thatta:** Another region in the North-West which was still independent was Thatta in Sindh. Akbar appointed Khan-i-Khanan as governor of Multan and asked him to conquer Sindh and subdue Bilochis in 1590. Thatta was annexed and placed under the governor of Multan as a **sarkar** in that **suba**.

The Mughal forces continued the suppression of Bilochis in the adjoining regions. Finally, by the year 1595, the complete supremacy of Mughals over North-West region was established.

### 6.3.6 Deccan and South

Akbar had started taking interest in Deccan states of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda after the conquest of Gujarat and Malwa. The earlier contacts were limited to the visits of emissaries or casual contacts. After 1590, Akbar started a planned Deccan policy to bring these states under Mughal control. Around this time, the Deccan states were facing internal strife and regular conflicts.

In 1591, Akbar sent a few missions to the Deccan states asking them to accept Mughal sovereignty. Faizi was sent to Asir and Burhanpur (Khandesh), Khwaja Aminuddin to Ahmednagar, Mir Mohammad Amin Mashadi to Bijapur, and Mirza Ma'sud to Golkonda. By 1593 all the missions returned without any success. It was reported that only I'aja Ali Khan, the ruler of Khandesh, was favourably inclined towards the Mughals. Now Akbar decided to follow a militant policy. Here we will not go into the details of the Deccan policy. We will provide only a brief account of Mughal expansion there. The details would be discussed in Block 3 Unit 9.

The first expedition was despatched to Ahmednagar under the command of Prince Murad and Abdul Rahim Khan Khanan. In 1595, the Mughal forces sieged Ahmednagar. Its ruler Chand Bibi at the head of a large army faced the Mughals. She approached Ibrahim Ali Shah of Bijapur and Qutub Shah of Golkonda for help but with no success. Chand Bibi gave a very serious resistance to the Mughal Army. After heavy losses on both sides, a treaty was formulated. According to this treaty Chand Bibi ceded Berar. After some time Chand Bibi attacked Berar to take it back. This time Nizamshahi, Qutabshahi and Adilshahi troops presented a joint front. The Mughals suffered heavy losses but could manage to hold the field. Meanwhile, serious differences between Murad and Khan Khanan weakened Mughal position. Akbar therefore despatched Abul Fazl to Deccan and recalled Khan Khanan. After Prince Murad's death in 1598, Prince Daniyal and Khan Khanan were sent to Deccan. Akbar, too, joined them. First, Ahmednagar was captured. Meanwhile, Chand Bibi died. Next, Asirgarh and adjoining regions were conquered by the Mughals (A.D. 1600). Adil Shah of Bijapur also expressed allegiance and offered his daughter in marriage to Prince Daniyal. Now Mughal territories in the Deccan included Asirgarh, Burhanpur, Ahmednagar and Berar.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) How was Gujarat brought under the Mughal rule?

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2) Which were the main areas affected by the rebellion of 1581.

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**6.4 ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANISATION**

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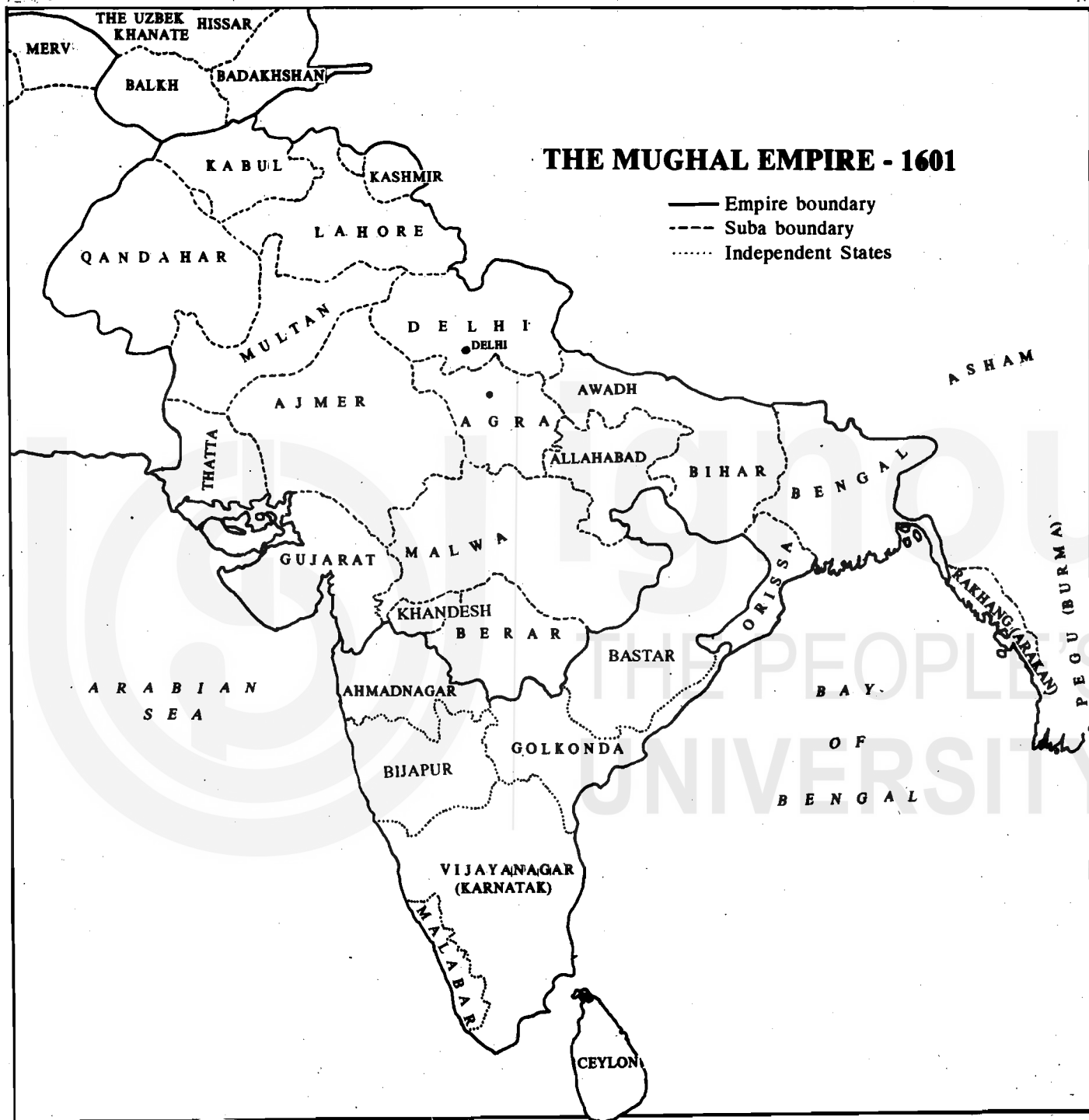
Akbar's policy of conquests and territorial expansion was accompanied by consolidating the new territories into Mughal administrative structure.

**Formation of Subas**

In 1580, Akbar divided the whole territory under the Mughals into 12 provinces which were called **subas**. These were Allahabad, Agra, Awadh, Ajmer, Admedabad (Gujarat), Bihar, Bengal (including Orissa), Delhi, Kabul, Lahore, Multan and Malwa. After the Deccan conquest, three new **subas** were added making them to 15. These were Berar, Khandesh and Ahmednagar.

These provinces were governed by a definite set of rules and a body of officers. The details of Provincial administration would be discussed in Block 4, Unit 14.

**Military Administration :** Akbar gave a new shape to the military administration also. He combined the earlier practices and new measures for organising army and tried to evolve a centralised military structure. He gave **mansabs** to both military and civil officers on the basis of their merit or service to the state. **Mansab** literally means an office or rank and **mansabdar** means holder of a rank. Akbar created 66 grades in



his **mansabari** system, i.e., from the command of ten (**dehbashi**) to the commander of Ten Thousand (**dahhazari**).

All **mansabdars** were paid in cash or in the form of a **jagir**. The military administration evolved under Akbar underwent many changes during the rule of his successors. Here we will not go into the details of **mansab** system as these would be discussed separately in Unit 15 of Block 4

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## 6.5 TERRITORIAL EXPANSION UNDER THE SUCCESSORS OF AKBAR

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The territorial expansion under Akbar gave a definite shape to the Mughal Empire. Very little progress was made during the reigns of his successors, viz., Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. After Aurangzeb we find that the process of disintegration of the Empire began. In this section we will trace the expansion of the Empire during the reigns of Akbar's successors.

During the seventeenth century the main areas of activity were the North-West frontier, South India, North-East and some isolated regions.

In the North-West the Roshanais were decisively curbed by 1625-26. Qandahar became a region of conflict between the Persians and Mughals. After Akbar's death, the Persians tried to capture Qandahar but failed under Shah Abbas I, the Safavi ruler. Following this, Shah Abbas I in 1620 requested Jahangir to hand over Qandahar to him but the latter declined to do so. In 1622, after another attack, Qandahar was captured by the Persians. The struggle to capture Qandahar continued till Aurangzeb's reign but Mughals got little success. The details of these would be discussed in the next Unit (7).

Mewar was the only region in Rajputana which had not come under the Mughals during Akbar's time. Jahangir followed a persistent policy to capture it. After a series of conflicts, Rana Amar Singh finally agreed to accept Mughal suzerainty. All the territories taken from Mewar including the fort of Chittor were returned to Rana Amar Singh and a substantial **jagir** was granted to his son Karan Singh. During the reigns of the successors of Akbar, the Rajputs generally continued to be friendly with the Mughals and held very high **mansabs**.

During the last years of Akbar and early years of Jahangir, Ahmednagar under Malik Ambar started challenging Mughal power. Malik Ambar succeeded in getting support of Bijapur also. A number of expeditions were sent by Jahangir but failed to achieve any success. During Shahjahan's reign, Mughal conflict with the Deccan kingdoms of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda was revived. Ahmednagar was first to be defeated and most parts were integrated into Mughal territory. By 1636, Bijapur and Golkonda were also defeated but these kingdoms were not annexed to the Mughal Empire. After a treaty the defeated rulers were to pay annual tributes and recognise Mughal authority. For almost ten years Shahjahan kept his son Aurangzeb as governor of Deccan. During this period, the Marathas were emerging as a strong political power in the region. During Aurangzeb's reign, the struggle with Deccan states and Marathas became more intensive. In fact, Aurangzeb spent the last twenty years of his life in Deccan fighting against them. By 1687, the Deccani kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda were annexed to the Mughal Empire. The details of the Mughal relations with Deccan states would be discussed in Block 3.

**Annexation of Assam :** The major success of the Mughals in the north-east was annexation of Assam. In 1661 Mir Jumla, the governor of Bengal invaded the Ahom kingdom. Mir Jumla had 12,000 cavalry, 30000 soldiers and a fleet of boats with guns under his command. The Ahom resistance was very feeble. Mir Jumla succeeded in capturing Kamrup the capital of Ahom kingdom. The king fled from the kingdom. In early 1663, the Swargdeo (heavenly king) surrendered and peace was established. Assam was annexed and Mughal officers were appointed. Mir Jumla died in 1663. Another notable achievement in north-east was capture of Chatgaon in 1664 under Shaista Khan the new governor of Bengal.

The Ahom kingdom could not be directly controlled for long. The Mughal **faujdar**s posted there had to face a number of confrontations. By 1680 Ahoms succeeded in capturing Kamrup and Mughal control ended.



## 6.6 POLICIES TOWARDS AUTONOMOUS CHIEFTAINS

In his efforts to consolidate the Mughal Empire, Akbar concentrated his attention on chieftains also. Chieftains is a term which is generally used (and has got wide acceptance among historians) for the ruling dynasties spread throughout the country. These rulers enjoyed a different sort of relationship with the Mughals. On the one hand they were free to carry out administration within their territories. On the other hand they held subordinate position vis-a-vis the Mughal Emperor.

Akbar's success lies in the fact that he could enlist the support of this group for the stability of his Empire. The subsequent Mughal Emperors also followed more or less the similar path.

### Nature of the Powers of Chieftains

In contemporary accounts these chiefs are referred to by different names such as Rai, Rana, Rawats, Rawals, Raja, Marzban, Kalantaran, etc. Sometimes the term **zamindar** is used to denote both ordinary landholders and autonomous chiefs. But there is a definite difference between the two. The **zamindars** were not independent of the Mughal authority while the chiefs enjoyed comparative autonomy in their territories and had a different relationship with the Mughal Emperors.

The first major study on chieftains was made by Ahsan Raza Khan. He established that they were not confined to peripheral areas of the Empire but were also found in the core regions in the *subas* of Delhi, Agra, Awadh and Allahabad. The largest number of these chieftains were Rajputs but they belonged to all castes including Muslims.

The chieftains were a powerful group possessing large infantry, cavalry and hundreds of miles of land area yielding vast amount of revenue.

### Mughal Encounters with Chieftains

After the defeat of the Lodis, the central power in India, Babur had to face joint rebellions of Afghans and chieftains. Humayun also had to face their hostility.

Akbar's initial contacts with the chieftains were through skirmishes and wars. In many cases the chieftains joined hands with Afghan and Mughal rebels. In the process of the conquests and consolidation of Mughal power, Akbar got the support and submission of chieftains. There was no formal declared policy of Akbar towards them. On the basis of references in the contemporary sources, we get an idea about the relations between chiefs and the Mughals. These may be summarised as follows:

- 1) After the conquest of or submission they were generally left free to administer their territories. They also had authority to collect revenue, impose taxes, levies and transit tax etc. In the collection of revenue the chieftains generally followed local practices rather than the Mughal regulations.
- 2) These autonomous chieftains were taken into military service of the Mughals. They were given **jagirs** and **mansabs**. A.R. Khan estimates that around 61 chiefs were given **mansab** during Akbar's reign. The same trend continued during the reigns of successive Mughal Emperors.
- 3) In many cases where chieftains were not directly absorbed as **mansabdars**, they are found helping the Mughal army in their operation against enemy territories or suppression of rebellions. They throughout the Mughal rule helped in conquering extensive areas, at times even against their own clansmen.
- 4) Apart from providing military help, they were given important administrative positions like **subadar** (governors), **diwan**, **bakhshi** etc.
- 5) Often they were assigned their own territories as **jagir** called as **watan jagir** which was hereditary and non transferable.
- 6) An interesting characteristic of their relations was that the Mughal Emperor retained the right to recognise the chieftain as the ruler in case of disputes within the family. At the same time, those who had accepted the Mughal suzerainty were extended military protection.
- 7) The chieftains were supposed to pay a regular tribute to the Mughal Emperor called **peshkash**. It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of this **peshkash**. This was at times in cash and at others in diamonds, gold, elephants or other rarities.

Apart from being a source of revenue, the payment of **peshkash** was a symbol of submission to the Mughals.

- 8) A number of matrimonial alliances were also established between Mughal roy family and the chieftains.



A Chieftain presenting tribute to Akbar

### Rebellions of Chieftains

We come across numerous instances of rebellions by chieftains. The causes for such rebellions are often stated as non-payment of revenue or tribute. In case of rebellions, the Mughal polity was not to dispossess the chieftains from their territories. Some one from the same family was left in control of the territory. In some instances when a chieftain was dispossessed, it was for a short period often as a reprimand. Later, he or one of his family members was reinstated.

The Mughal policy towards chieftains initiated under Akbar continued during the regins of subsequent Mughal Emperors. The policy of absorbing them into Mughal nobility paid rich dividends to the Empire. The Mughal Emperor succeeded in getting the support of chieftains and their armies for new conquests. As part of Mughal nobility, their help was also available for administring a large Empire. In addition, a friendly relationship with them ensured peace for the Empire.

At the same time, the chieftains also benefited. Now they could retain their territories and administer them as they wished. In addition, they received **jagir** and **mansab**. Often they got territories in **jagir** bigger than their kindgoms. It also provided them security against enemies and rebellions.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) List the **subas** formed in 1580.

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2) List the main achievements in territorial expansion under Aurangzeb.

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3) How the Mughal policy towards chieftains was of mutual benefit?

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## 6.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit we studied that Akbar became Emperor at a very young age. During the first four years Bairam Khan worked as regent for the young Emperor. The nobility was divided into various factions each trying to establish its supremacy. Akbar gradually took control of the situation and created a dedicated group of nobles faithful to him. The Mughal Empire's control was limited to a small territory.

Akbar started a policy of conquests and brought large areas in the east, west, north and south under the Empire, though success in the south was confined to the regions of Deccan only. Along with conquests, the process of consolidation was also initiated. As a result, the conquered territories were placed under a unified administrative system. The consolidated Empire created by Akbar was maintained with a measure of success by his successors for more than hundred years. During the reign of Aurangzeb, new territories in the south (Bijapur, Golkonda, etc.) and in the North-East were added. The notable achievement of the Mughal Emperors was in securing the help of the autonomous chieftains for the expansion and consolidation of the Empire.

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## 6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Please read the first phase of Bairam Khan's regency in section 6.2 and write the answer.
- 2) The victory of Mughal forces in the second battle of Panipat strengthened Bairam Khan's position. Read in section 6.2 the second phase of his regency.
- 3) Bairam Khan alienated large sections of nobility after 1557. These nobles joined together and started opposing him. Read section 6.2.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Akbar made several attempts to capture Gujarat and succeeded by 1580 in subjugating her. Read sub-section 6.3.2.
- 2) The areas mainly affected were Eastern provinces and Gujarat. See sub-section 6.3.4.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See section 6.4.
- 2) The main expansion under Aurangzeb was done in the Deccan and Assam.
- 3) The Mughal policy allowed the chieftains to retain and administer their territories. At the same time the Mughal emperors could get their help whenever needed. See details in section 6.6.

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# UNIT 7 RELATIONS WITH CENTRAL ASIA AND PERSIA

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## Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Global and Regional Perspectives
- 7.3 Relations with the Uzbegs
  - 7.3.1 Babur and Humayun
  - 7.3.2 Akbar
  - 7.3.3 Jahangir
  - 7.3.4 Shahjahan
- 7.4 Relations with Persia
  - 7.4.1 Babur and Humayun
  - 7.4.2 Akbar
  - 7.4.3 Jahangir
  - 7.4.4 Shahjahan
- 7.5 The Deccan States and the Perso-Mughal Dilemma
- 7.6 Aurangzeb and the North-West Frontier
- 7.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.8 Key Words
- 7.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 7.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit deals with the tripartite relations which developed between the Mughlas, Persians and Uzbegs during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The study of this unit will enable you to understand the:

- geo-political significance of North-Western frontier; the global and regional perspective which shaped and determined tripartite relations;
- main stages in the Mughal-Uzbeg relations; and
- main phases of the Mughal-Safavi relations.

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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Surrounded by a natural defence from the Himalayan mountains, the Indian ocean, Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal on its three sides, India was vulnerable only from the North-West frontiers. Invaders had come at frequent intervals from lands beyond the Hindukush mountains comprising Persia, Kabul and Transoxiana. Apart from the Greeks, Huns, Turks and other invaders, the Mughals also arrived in India by the same old route. After establishing their power, they were vigilant enough to guard their North-Western frontiers. For expediency, Akbar concentrated on the extension and consolidation of his Empire within India rather than involving himself in ventures beyond the Hindukush or Hormuz. From the very beginning of his reign, therefore, he wanted to retain Kabul and Qandahar under his sway as a bulwark against external invaders. Abul Fazl emphasized the fact that Kabul and Qandahar are the twin gates of India, one leading to Central Asia and the other to Persia. Earlier, Babur, too, had noted this aspect in his **Baburnama**. Later Chroniclers like Sujana Rai Bhandari also expressed such views. While Akbar and his predecessors had a nostalgic love for their homeland, his successors were drawn into the whirlwind of a reckless imperialist ambition and, hence, in many ways the Mughal Empire had to pay the price for adventures in the North-Western campaigns under Shahjahan. The Mughal relations with Persia and Central Asia were determined partly by internal political developments and their own mutual tripartite needs, and global and regional perspective and considerations.

## 7.2 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

In the first decade of the sixteenth century, as the Timurid and the Turkoman states fell apart, two new states came into existence in West Asia and Central Asia (See Unit 1, Block 1). The borders of the two states (the Uzbeks and the Safavis) were contiguous except that the river Amu separated the two. Mutual rivalry and consistent warfare between the two were, therefore, inevitable. This was because their imperialistic adventures could only succeed at the expense of each other's territorial possessions. Although these new states once formed the provinces of a larger Empire and shared many common features, they fell and sprouted into two separate and distinct entities in early sixteenth century. They now differed from each other in their racial, lingual, sectarian, and to a great extent, even in their sociocultural formations and traditions. The upsurge of the Safavi 'warriors of faith' who organised their co-religionists as a political force, established a Persian state as an inadvertent rival to the Empire of the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. Largescale migrations (voluntary or forced) resulted in the reshuffling of population — the **sunni** Muslims trickling from Shia Persia of the Safavis to the **sunni** Transoxiana of the Uzbeks and vice versa.

The three states in the region, namely, Central Asia (Transoxiana), Ottoman Turkey and the Mughals, were **sunni** Muslims and as such had no bone of contention to embitter their relations on religious basis. While the Uzbek Empire could, therefore, rely upon its other contemporary counterparts like the Ottomans, the Safavi Empire had no such reliable and permanent allies bound to them by the ties of much trumpeted 'common faith'. Apart from "sectarian differences" (so extensively exploited in the 16th century for political ends) Persia had several other points of discord with the above-mentioned states. Due to geographical proximity, the extension of the Uzbek Empire could be possible only at the expense of Persia which was geopolitically important, commercially prosperous and fertile. As the Ottoman Empire was keen to hold all the maritime trade routes, its interest in the flourishing Hormuz port, Red sea and Indian ocean was sure to bring it into conflict not only with the Persian but also at times with the Portuguese and the Russians. The Portuguese, particularly in the Indian Ocean, were a constant threat to the Ottomans who wanted to eliminate them. The occasional Portuguese-Persian friendship, therefore, was not surprising.

The commercial and strategic significance of Persia, and, its carpet and silk industries and the fertility of its soil always excited the cupidity of its neighbours. Thus, Persia had to face alternately and almost continually the ambitious and expansionist ventures of the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. Since the Czars of Russia had an eye on Transoxiana, they not only instigated the Qazaqs to invade Uzbek Khans but also invoked friendly relations with the Shi'ite Persia. Thus, Persia could get temporary support of the Portuguese, Russians and later on the English. This was because each of them had had their own vested interests and wanted to use Persia only as a counterpoise for their respective rivals.

With India, the Persians had a bone of contention — the territory of Qandahar—which led to a situation ranging from hostility to an occasional armed struggle. In spite of this, the Persians almost always responded to every call of help from the Mughals. For example, Shah Ismail had assisted Babur against the Uzbeks and Tahmasp also ensured the restoration of the lost Empire of Humayun. Shah Abbas maintained friendly relations with Akbar and Jahangir and keenly responded to the calls of help from the Deccan states of Golconda, Bijapur and even pleaded their case with Akbar.

The Uzbeks considered the Mughals as an important balancing power whose slightest tilt towards Persia could disturb the peace and progress in the region. The Ottomans had no animity with the Uzbeks and their common interests had brought them closer particularly over the Persian question. The Mughals, however, were not very favourably inclined towards the Ottomans. Thus, there existed **entente cordiale** between the two blocks of power — a near concord between the Ottomans and the Uzbeks and a conventional understanding between the Mughals and the Persians.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Highlight the significance of Kabul and Qandahar in the context of the North-Western frontier policy of the Mughals.

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- 2) List the geographical factors which determined the tripartite relationship of India, Persia and Transoxiana.

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- 3) What was the global situation which influenced the Mughal policy towards Central Asia and Persia?

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## 7.3 RELATIONS WITH THE UZBEGS

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As discussed earlier in Unit 1, Babur was expelled from Central Asia and after much hardship in Kabul, he managed to conquer India in 1526. In the following Sub-sections we will discuss the Mughal relations with the Uzbegs.

### 7.3.1 Babur and Humayun

With the expulsion of Babur from Central Asia (See Unit 1), the traditional hostility between the Mughals and the Uzbegs was suspended for a while probably due to the fact that there was nothing to quarrel for as in the case of Persians over the issue of Qandahar. As embassy had been sent by Kuchum and other Uzbeg Sultans in 1528 to India to congratulate Babur upon his conquest. Notwithstanding this amicable gesture on the part of the Uzbegs, the Mughals never forgot the loss of their 'ancestral' kindom. Despite a persistent desire of the Mughals to conquer Transoxiana, it was probably apparent to them that the ambition itself was an unimaginative proposition. While the defence of the North-Western frontier had become a constant problem and even the conquest of Qandahar was still a dream, how could they plan to conquer Transoxiana and exercise an effective control over these remote "ancestral lands"? Nevertheless, Babur's exhortations to Humayun to reconquer some parts of Transoxiana and latter's unsuccessful or temporarily successful attempts continued. However, these were without any lasting effects as Mughal territorial possessions in India were yet to be consolidated and extended. In subsequent years, both the Uzbegs and the Mughals were faced with numerous internal problems and could not venture to expand. A new chapter begins in the history of Mughal-Uzbeg relations with the emergene of Abdullah Khan (1560-98) who tried to establish vital contacts with Akbar.

### 7.3.2 Akbar

The Mughal-Uzbeg relations under Akbar can be discussed in three phases

- (1) 1572-1577, (2) 1583-1589 and (3) 1589-1598.

### 1. First Phase (1572-1577)

It was neither the expectation of some military assistance from Akbar nor a question of exploring the possibility of making an alliance against the Persian Empire which prompted Abdullah to send two embassies in 1572 and 1577. With his designs on territories like Badakhshan and Qandahar, it was only natural that Abdullah should strive to develop friendly relations with Akbar and thereby ward off the danger from this side. These two embassies were thus probing and appeasing missions sent for the following purposes.

- a) To ascertain Akbar's attitude towards Persia and Qandahar;
- b) To find out his general policy in relation to Badakhshan and, if possible,
- c) To mislead Akbar about his own designs on Badakhshan.

The dangers threatening Akbar at his North-Western frontiers e.g., rebellious attitude of Mirza Hakim (ruler of Kabul) and the latter's friendship with Shah Ismail II of Persia, the possibility of triple alliance between Abdullah, Mirza Hakim and Ismail II and Akbar's own inability to become involved in external affairs necessitated a friendly attitude towards Abdullah Khan. Hence, an embassy was sent in 1578 to Akbar. Akbar rejected the proposal for a joint attack on Persia. It seems that the reaction of Abdullah to this letter was not quite favourable since no further embassies were sent to Akbar for about a decade.

From 1577 onwards, a shift is noticeable in the respective positions of Abdullah Khan and Akbar which also brought about a change in their policies towards each other. By 1583, Abdullah had conquered all of Transoxiana, and had also eliminated all his kinsmen. When his father died in 1583, he became the **Khaqan** also and could now compete with his other counterparts in the Muslim world. Abdullah conquered Badakhshan in 1584 and the two Mirzas (Mirza Shah Rukh and Mirza Hakim) had to leave the territory. While Abdullah had improved his position and was now adopting a bolder and demanding attitude towards Akbar, the attitude of Akbar himself had become more conciliatory.

By this time the difficulties of Akbar had increased further. There were troubles in Kashmir and Gujarat, and also tribal commotions in Kabul, Sawad and Bajaur. The frontiers of Akbar had become even more insecure after the death of Mirza Hakim (1585). The Persian Empire had also become weak now under the unsuccessful reign of the incompetent and half-blind ruler Khudabanda from 1577 to 1588 and the Empire had been completely shattered by the invasions of the Ottomans as well as by internal intrigues of the nobles.

### 2. Second Phase (1583-1589)

After a lapse of several years, Abdullah sent another embassy to Akbar in 1586. Akbar responded by sending Hakim Humeim in 1586 as his envoy. It is difficult to explain why Abdullah chose to send two separate letters simultaneously. Nevertheless, neither of the two letters can be discarded as spurious since Akbar's reply contains answers to the questions raised separately in both the letters. It is clear from the contents of both the written and verbal messages from Abdullah that the purpose of this embassy was not to seek the cooperation of Akbar for an attack on Persia but to prevent him from sending any assistance to the Persian ruler. Abdullah explained that he had discontinued all correspondence with Akbar from 1578-1585 due to the reports that "Akbar had adopted the religion of metapsychosis and the behaviour of Jogis and had deviated from the religion of the Prophet". In his reply sent through Hakim Humeim Akbar called it "fabrications and accusations of certain disaffected persons".

### 3. Third Phase (1589-1598)

The despatch of Ahmad Ali Ataliq from Abdullah's court marks the beginning of the third phase in the Uzbek-Mughal relations. Through the letter sent with this envoy, Abdullah sought friendship and sent counsel for "exerting ourselves to strengthen the foundation of concord and make this Hindukush the boundary between us". Nevertheless, the formal acceptance of this offer of peace was confirmed by Akbar only in 1596 after the conquest of Qandahar. There were certain plausible reasons for this conciliatory attitude of Abdullah towards Akbar:

- i) Mirza Shah Rukh grandson of the ruler of Badakhshan and sons of Mirza Hakim came to India and Akbar himself remained at Kabul;

- ii) The situation in Persia started showing signs of improvement from 1589 onwards. Shah Abbas concluded a humiliating treaty with the Ottomans so as to be able to deal with the Uzbeks and sent a letter to Akbar seeking his assistance against the Uzbek ruler.
- iii) The strained relations with the Qazaqs had acquired new dimensions as the diplomatic relations of the Qazaqs with Russian Czars which began under the Timurids in the 15th century were very actively pursued between 1550-1599. Notwithstanding twenty-five embassies sent by Uzbek rulers and six return embassies (including Jenkinson's) to Khanates and Qazaqs, the relations were no better than what could be termed a diplomatic-economic offensive. After the conquest of Kazan, Astarakhan and Siberia by Russia, the main intermediary commercial centres and brisk trade between the two states established earlier by Timur had been destroyed. Similarly, the rivalry over the Qazaq region between the Czar and the Khan turned the balance in favour of the Qazaqs whose ruler Tawakkul sent his envoy Muhammad to Russia in 1594, who not only brought troops with fire-arms but also the assurance of full diplomatic protection.
- v) The rebellion of his own son Abdul Momin had further aggravated the problems of Abdullah Khan. In 1592, he sent *nishans* to Din Muhammad (nephew of Abdullah Khan), advising him to give up the idea of conquering Qandahar since an understanding had been reached with Akbar that the Hindukush and Qandahar should form the boundary between the two kingdoms.

In the changed circumstances, Akbar was feeling emboldened and was also aware of the aggressive designs of Abdullah Khan due to which he had personally come to Punjab and was planning to occupy Qandahar as well from 1589 onwards. Akbar entertained designs upon Qandahar and was finally successful in persuading the Mirzas to come to India. After the conquest of Qandahar, Akbar felt the need of reviving his contacts with Abdullah Khan. Since after the occupation of Qandahar, the Mughal forces had engaged themselves in an armed conflict with the Uzbeks over the possessions of Garmsir and Zamindawar, it had become all the more necessary



Badakhshan and Deccani ambassadors presenting tributes to Mughal Emperor Akbar.



to pacify Abdullah Khan. Moreover, in 1594, the Ottoman Sultan Murad III had sent a letter to Abdullah proposing a joint attack on the Persian territory. The fear of the Ottoman-Uzbek friendship might have also alarmed Akbar. No military alliance could take place at this time, as the Uzbek envoy was still on his way to the Ottoman court when Sultan Murad died in 1595.

The fear of the Uzbeks continued, particularly, in view of the fact that Abdullah Khan had opened correspondence with the new Ottoman ruler Mohammad and had even proposed a joint attack of Persia. After the occupation of Qandahar, Akbar realised the urgency of sending an embassy to Abdullah through Khwaja Ashraj Naqshbandi and showed his willingness to accept the Hindukush as the boundary between the two kingdoms. The envoy carrying these messages received audience with Abdullah in September 1597 at Qarshi. For the return embassy, Abdullah sent Mir Quresh with the Mughal envoy, but before they could reach India, the Uzbek ruler died in 1598. The Indian ambassadors returned, though Mir Quresh was not able to accompany them.

### 7.3.3 Jahangir

Jahangir's relations with Turan were predominantly determined by his relations with Persia. Although his love for Turan is visible in his autobiography, the conquest of Turan was not included in his plans. His relationship with the Uzbeks is best assessed in his own answer to an English traveller Thomas Coryat's request for a letter of recommendation in 1616 that:

There were no great amity betwixt the Tartarian princes and himself and his recommendations would not help the traveller at Samarqand.

In the first decade of his rule, Jahangir maintained no active political relations with the Uzbeks except for attempting to forestall any probable expansionist design on his frontiers. The early indifference of Jahangir towards the Uzbeks was expediently changed as soon as the question of Qandahar was raised by the Shah through his envoy Zainul Beg. In February 1621, Mir Baraka was sent on a "highly confidential mission" to Imam Quli, the Uzbek ruler who in turn sent an embassy to Nur Jahan Begam. Imam Quli's confidential message received by Jahangir with much enthusiasm as it contained criticism of the Persians and sought an alliance with the Mughals against Persians. Jahangir had been invited to join the holy war which was obligatory on Imam Quli not only to avenge the death of his own father but also to clear the road to Mecca which was under Persian control. Although Jahangir had himself ignored friendly overtures of the Ottoman Sultan of Turkey, the news of a possible Uzbek-Ottoman alliance was quite disturbing for him. After the capture of Baghdad in 1624, Sultan Murad had sent a favourable reply to Imam Quli's call for an alliance against Persia and had even exhorted him to take away Iran from the control of the Persians. The Ottoman Sultan had sent a similar letter to Jahangir aiming at a triple alliance against Persia. Although several letters were exchanged during 1625-26, no plans could materialise as Jahangir died in 1627.

### 7.3.4 Shah Jahan

With the accession of Shah Jahan, the Uzbek-Mughal relations took a new turn. The underlying objective of Shah Jahan's foreign policy was three fold:

- i) The recovery of Qandahar;
- ii) The reconquest of the "ancestral land"; and
- iii) The hegemony over Deccan.

For this purpose, he wanted to ensure friendship of both the contemporary powers of Persia and Transoxiana alternatively when Qandahar and Transoxiana were invaded. Out of sheer diplomacy, Shah Jahan ignored the invasion of Nazr Muhammad on Kabul and sent an embassy to Imam Quli at Bukhara. Through this exchange of embassies, solidarity against Persia was emphasized. Shah Jahan's embassy led by Safdar Khan arrived in April 1633. This visit was followed by another envoy, Mir Husain, in May 1637. Unlike Jahangir, Shah Jahan even wrote a letter to Murad IV in 1636 expressing his desire to reconquer Qandahar and proposing a

tripartite alliance of Mughals, Uzbegs and Ottomans against the Persians. Shah Jahan, however, managed to conquer Qandahar even without the assistance of any of these rulers.

After the capture of Qandahar in 1638, Shah Jahan's sole aim was to conquer his 'ancestral land' of Transoxiana. A large-scale Uzbek invasion of Maruchaq along Persian frontiers provided the much sought after Persian-Mughal entente in April-May 1640. A joint invasion of Balkh was proposed. However, the task was left unfulfilled. The correspondence between the Persians and the Mughals at this juncture shows that the latter succeeded in persuading the Persians to cooperate with them only to a limited extent as the letters from the Persian side smacked of their fear and circumspection. Equally apprehensive were the half-hearted allies — the Uzbegs — as they could sense the expansionist ambitions of Shah Jahan. An opportunity soon appeared in this regard for the Mughals.

The Uzbek Empire was passing through a phase of anarchy. Imam Quli, the popular ruler of the Uzbegs, lost his eyesight and abdicated in favour of his brother Nazr Muhammad in November 1641. The despotism and stubborn autocracy of Nazr Muhammad provoked opposition of the nobility which now started supporting his son Abdul Aziz. In desperation, Nazr Muhammad sought the assistance of Shah Jahan who immediately seized this opportunity to conquer Balkh on the pretext of saving it from the rebels. The Mughal forces successfully entered Balkh in early 1646. Nazr Muhammad was forced to seek shelter in Persia. Therefore, Shah Jahan sent two letters — one to Nazr Muhammad informing him about the conquest of Balkh without any apologies or explanations and another to Shah Abbas II of Persia giving him the news of occupation of Balkh which was a prelude to the conquest of Samarqand and Bukhara by the Mughals. The conquest was justified on grounds of extending necessary protection to the Saiyids of Balkh. It was also conveyed through this letter that Nazr Muhammad should be sent to Mecca and should not be allowed to return to Turan. The Persians themselves hesitated to support the cause of Nazr Muhammad as they were doubtful about his success. In fact, Shah Jahan had despatched three successive envoys to Persia for ensuring Persian neutrality in the Turanian affairs. However, this was not the only factor which determined the Persian attitude towards Nazr Muhammad. They were somewhat reluctant to help him not only because of his sullen temperament but also because of the traditional Uzbek-Persian hostility. The absence of capable leadership in Persia further thwarted such designs. Before the envoys reached Persia Nazr Muhammad had already left for Turan.

The conquest of Balkh and other territories proved easier for Shah Jahan than their occupation. The conquest at the same time was hazardous, too, due to a variety of factors. These included lack of adequate means of communication, severity of climate, staggering cost in men, money and material and the hostility of the local population. The evacuation was also difficult for the Mughals and was equally unpleasant for the Persians. Hence, an agreement had to be reached with Nazr Muhammad in October 1647.

In 1650, Shah Jahan sent an embassy to Abdul Aziz, the Uzbek ruler of Turan. But the political realignments taking place in Turan recently had made the situation difficult for Abdul Aziz. His brother Subhan Quli was being supported by his father-in-law Abul Ghazi — the then ruler of Khwarazm and a satellite of Persia. Shah Jahan often persuaded Abdul Aziz to invade Kabul. Shah Jahan's attempt to form an alliance with the Ottoman rulers Murad III and Muhammad IV had failed. The tenor of the letters sent by the Ottomans to Shah Jahan was distasteful to the latter and not very conducive to mutual understanding. The Mughal occupation of Balkh was also not liked by the Ottomans. Thus, the Mughal-Ottoman relations could not prosper.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) What were the salient features of the Mughal-Uzbek relations in the third phase (1589-98)?

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2) What were the objectives of Shah Jahan's policy towards the Uzbegs?

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## 7.4 RELATIONS WITH PERSIA

After having familiarised you with the Mughal-Uzbek relations, we attempt to tell you about the nature of Mughal relations with Persia.

### 7.4.1 Babur and Humayun

Babur's relations with Shah Ismail have already been discussed in Unit 1 of Block 1. After the death of Shah Ismail (1524) and the accession of his son Shah Tahmasp (1524-76), Babur set a condolence-cum-congratulatory embassy to the new Shah under Khwajagi Asad who returned with a Persian emissary Sulaiman Aqa.

In the meantime, two Persian embassies under Hasan Chelebi and his younger brother successively reached the Mughal court. Babur also sent a return embassy though the purport of the letters and verbal messages exchanged are nowhere recorded.

After Babur's death (1530), Kamran, Humayun's brother, held his principality of Kabul, Qandahar and the territories extending up to Lahore firmly against the Persians. In 1534-35, the Persian prince Sam Mirza and his ambitious noble Aghziwar Khan were involved in a feud with Kamran and Khwaja Kalan (governor of Qandahar). However, Aghziwar Khan was killed in the encounter and Sam Mirza returned to Herat. This made Shah Tahmasp lead an expedition with a force of seven to eight thousands in 1537 against the Mughals. A contemporary historian blames the governor Khwaja Kalan for inept handling of the situation because it was he who surrendered the fort of Qandahar to the Shah leading to the fall of surrounding territories. When Shah Tahmasp was beset by turmoil in Azerbaijan and the tensions were mounting on his western frontiers Kamran easily reconquered Qandahar in 1537-38.

Humayun did not maintain an active contact with Persia upto 1543. It was only after his expulsion from India in mid 1543 that Humayun wrote a letter to Shah in January 1544. The letters exchanged between Humayun and Tahmasp and his officials are available and throw light on the different phases of Indo-Persian relations. Ahmad Sultan Shamlur, the Persian governor of Siestan, invited the royal fugitive and Humayun took shelter with fifty of his ill-equipped loyalists in Persia. He did so mainly at the advice of Bairam Khan. Tahmasp had himself suffered at the hands of his rebellious brothers. Hence, he appreciated Humayun's difficulties.

Humayun siezed Qandahar from its Persian commander Budagh Khan in September 1545. Although some misunderstanding had temporarily soured the relation between the two potentates leading to speculations that the demand for conversion to **shii'ism** was the cause of rupture, the cordiality was by and large maintained on the two sides. Shah Tahmasp sent a congratulatory embassy under Walad Beg Takkalur in 1546 for Humayun's victory over Kabul. In his letter sent through the returning envoy, Humayun sent invitation to Khwaja Abdus Samad, the famous Persian painter, and certain other talented men to join his service. Humayun recalled his envoy Khwaja Jalaluddin Mahmud (sent in 1548). Another envoy Qazi Shaikh Ali was sent in 1549 to condole the death of Bahram Mirza and to relate the rebellion of Kamran Mirza against Humayun. Shah Tahmasp's envoy Kamaluddin Ulugh Beg brought his message. Humayun was advised to refrain from showing clemency to Kamran and

military assistance, if and when required, was offered. The last recorded embassy from Tahmasp came in early summer of 1553 after which Humayun was once again preoccupied with recovery and consolidation of Indian domains.

#### 7.4.2 Akbar

Humayun's death in 1556 reopened the issue of Qandahar. The seizure of Qandahar by the Shah had strained Persian relations. It was because of this that Tahmasp's embassy in 1562 under Said Beg Saavi to Akbar (to condole Humayun's death and to congratulate him on his accession) remained unanswered. Subsequently, Shah Tahmasp's two letters recommending Sultan Mahmud Bhakkari's candidature for entering the ranks of nobility were also ignored because, as recorded by Abul Fazl, merit and not recommendation determined the state appointments. Silence was maintained even in 1572 when Khudabanda (contender for Persian throne) sent Yar Ali Beg to Akbar with an eye on his support during the imminent war of succession. After the death of Tahmasp (May 1576), Shah Ismail II ascended the throne. He maintained friendly relations with Mirza Hakim. With the accession of Khudabanda in November 1577, Persia was plunged in turmoil. In 1583, Prince Abbas sent Murshid Tabrizi to Akbar to ensure consolidation of his position in his province of Khurasan. Akbar was unhappy with the Persians over the loss of Qandahar. He ignored, says Abul Fazl, "the petition of a rebel son against his father". In 1591, Shah Abbas again sent an embassy under Yadgar Rumlu as he faced a major threat from the Uzbeks. In November 1594, another envoy Ziauddin arrived, nevertheless, the silence suggestive of a cold and stiff relationship continued till March 1594-1595 when the Mughal forces finally entered Qandahar and conquered Zamindawar and Qarmsir.

In 1596, Akbar sent his first embassy to Shah Abbas through Khwaja Ashraf Naqshbandi. In the letter, he justified his conquest of Qandahar in view of the suspected loyalty of the Mirzas towards the Shah and explained away his complete silence owing to his inability to offer timely help to Shah because of the Uzbek embassies. In 1598, Shah Abbas sent an envoy Manuchihr Beg with the returning Indian envoy. Another envoy Mirza Ali Beg informed Akbar about the conquest of all the forts except Qandahar expecting that Akbar would return it. Relying upon his secure frontiers due to the death of Abdullah Khan in 1598, Akbar returned from Punjab to Agra. In 1602, Manuchihr Beg was dismissed by Akbar and Mughal envoy Masum Bhakkari was sent to the Shah. The Shah sent two letters one each to Akbar and Hameeda Banu begam. The last years of Akbar were clouded by Salim's (Jahangir) revolt. The commanders of Farah, Khurasan and Zamindawar seized the opportunity and captured Bust despite stiff resistance from Shah Beg, the Mughal governor of Qandahar. Prince Salim had maintained independent friendly relations with Shah Abbas exchanging gifts and filial pleasantries so long as Akbar was alive. Nevertheless, an organised Persian invasion on Qandahar region in the last days of Akbar's reign (22 October, 1605) followed by the advance of Persian forces in February 1606 for the conquest of Qandahar was the beginning of hostilities between the two rulers. Despite Khusrau's rebellion, the Persian invasion proved to be a fiasco.

#### 7.4.3 Jahangir

The first Persian congratulatory and condulatory mission reached the Mughal court in March 1611. This mission returned in August 1613 accompanied by a Mughal envoy Khan Alam. Shah Abbas despatched several major and minor embassies. A number of 'purchasing missions' were also exchanged and 'toy trade' (of manuscripts, paintings, astrolabes and other such curiosities) continued. Sometime, the Shah took the trouble of supplying certain articles to Jahangir by ordering them from Venice and other parts of Europe. A mission under Sherley brothers arrived in June 1615. Though preceded and followed by a number of other embassies, the only embassy which openly dealt with the reopening of the Qandahar issue was led by Zainul Beg. However, Jahangir's consultations with his counsellors resulted in the rejection of the idea of surrender of Qandahar as it could have been treated as a sure sign of weakness. By winning over the trust of Jahangir and thus taking the small Mughal detachment unawares, Shah Abbas occupied Qandahar on 11 June 1622. Jahangir, in fact, had sensed the intrigues on his western frontiers but failed to save Qandahar

various reasons. The court politics, Jahangir's failing health, rupture of mutual relations of Nurjahan and Khurram, new polarisation of political forces after Ladli Begam's (Nurjahan's daughter from her first husband) marriage with Shahrayar (Jahangir's son) and Khurram's (Shahjahan) rebellion, were several factors which led to the loss of Qandahar.

Shah Abbas tried to assuage Jahangir's anger over the loss of Qandahar by sending two successive embassies. Another embassy arrived under Aqa Muhammad in October 1625. Jahangir's reply to this letter was marked by diplomatic silence over Qandahar affair with an expedient reaffirmation of old friendly ties. It was in October 1626 that four letters including one from Nur Jahan Begum were sent to Persia by Jahangir.

#### 7.4.4 Shah Jahan

With the death of Shah Abbas in January 1629, after four decades of successful rule, Persia was plunged into uncertainties under its new and inexperienced ruler Shah Safi Mirza. Shah Jahan was eager to seize the first opportunity to regain Qandahar and had not only given a warm welcome to the rebel Persian Chief Sher Khan but had also proposed a joint attack on Persia (from India, Turan and Turkey under the Ottomans) in his letter to Murad IV. Shah Safi despatched Muhammad Ali Beg Isfahani in response to Shah Jahan's embassy sent under Mir Barka on 20 October 1629.

Shah Jahan's policy towards North-West frontier was a drain on the Mughal resources. The three abortive campaigns in Qandahar and the expeditions of Balkh and Badakhshan were equally harmful to the exchequer as well as to Mughal prestige. The embargo placed on trade due to hostility with Iran further resulted in losses of various kinds. To facilitate his conquest of Qandahar, Shah Jahan had unsuccessfully tried to lure the Persian governor Ali Mardan through promises of future favours to surrender the town but the offer met with refusal. Nevertheless, the defensive measures being undertaken by Ali Mardan to face the Mughals were misconstrued as his enemies instigated Shah Safi that Ali Mardan was intending to revolt. The Shah's insistence for personal appearance of Ali Mardan in his court and the rejection of all his pleas frightened the latter who chose his life instead of loyalty to the Shah and joined the Mughals.

On 26 February 1638, the Mughal contingent entered Qandahar and Qilij Khan was appointed as its governor. After the capture of Qandahar, Shah Jahan tried to placate Shah Safi and even offered to make an annual payment of a sum equal to the revenues of Qandahar. On another front Shah Safi made peace with the Ottomans in September 1639. Satisfied on this count he started preparations for a war with the Mughals. However, before the campaign could be undertaken, he died in 1642. At the accession of his successor Shah Abbas II — a lad of ten years — Shah Jahan promptly sent a congratulatory embassy as he had his eyes set on Turan. On the other hand, the Persians were keen to recover Qandahar. The recently concluded friendship with the Ottomans and the anarchy prevailing in Qandahar due to Mughal governor's inefficiency had further brightened the prospects for Persian victory. In spite of exhortations from Shah Jahan, the Mughal nobles were reluctant to march towards highlands in winter and the ageing Mughal governor Daulat Khan failed to defend Qandahar. Thus, the Shah easily occupied it in December 1648. In May 1649, Aurangzeb came with the Mughal Wazir Sa'dullah and occupied the places in the vicinity. Shah Wardi the Persian envoy who had come to the Mughal court in July 1649 to offer explanations for the conquest of Qandahar, Zamindawar and other territories, was given audience. But soon two more detachments were sent under Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb to besiege Qandahar. The difficult physical terrain and the disruption in the line of supply made their stay in a hostile region impossible. If Bernier is to be believed, even the Persian soldiers in the Mughal army fought half heartedly against their kinsmen. To add to the trouble, the marauding Uzbeks (despite heavy bribery) continued to invade Ghazni. Dara was not an efficient military leader. The fourth expedition to Qandahar by Shahjahan in 1656 was, therefore, abandoned. A contemporary historian rightly pointed out that the Qandahar campaign resulted in the massacre of thirty to forty thousand people and an expenditure of three krors and five lakhs of rupees.

Apart from Qandahar, the Deccan problem was another point of conflict between the Persians and the Mughals. The Deccan **shia** ruling dynasties (Qutubul Mulk of Golconda and Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar) were driven by the Mughal threat towards the Persians due to their “mutual sectarian affinity”. The diplomatic relations established by Akbar since 1573 with the Deccan states and subsequent conquests laid the basis for the Mughal Deccan relations. Under Jahangir, the Mughal offensive on Ahmadnagar and Bijapur led by Shahi Jahan and Khan Khanan compelled the Deccanis to request for Persian intercession. Envoys from Quli Qutubshah (1590-1611) and Malik Ambar — the ‘commander-in-chief’ of Nizamshah — invoked the sympathy of Shah Abbas who went to the extent of offering a slice of Persia in exchange for the safety of the Deccan states. By 1617, however, the Deccan-Mughal negotiations were completed not so much through the unappreciated intervention of Shah but through the Mughal policy of conciliation and force.

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## 7.5 THE DECCAN STATES AND THE PERSO-MUGHAL DILEMMA

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A decade of diplomatic silence in the Mughal-Persian relations was broken when the Deccan problem cropped up. The occupation of Ahmadnagar by the Mughals in 1633 had disheartened Golconda. In 1636, Shah Jahan sent an ultimatum to Qutub Shah and Adil Shah to read **khutba** in the **sunni** fashion and exclude the name of the Shah of Persia. The Golconda ruler succumbed to the pressure. In 1637, Shah Safi appointed Ahmad Beg Qurchi to proceed on a mission to Adil Shah. Apart from the regular exchange of embassies, Qutub Shah used the good offices of his nephew (then attached to the Persian court) and proposed safe flight and asylum in Persia if need arose. When Abdullah Qutub Shah sent Hakimulmulk in 1641 to the ruler of Persia, the Mughal authorities objected and forced a break in the exchange of letters. In 1650, a Persian envoy came on an English ship. Now the Shah, having conquered Qandahar, was in a better bargaining position. The Perso-Deccan contacts also increased due to immigrants from Persia holding high positions at the court. One such Muhammad Said Mir Jumla, a diamond merchant, maintained his connection with his homeland and corresponded, with Shah Abbas II, and such other. Abdullah Qutub became jealous of Mir Jumla who turned to the Mughal court for help and finally entered the Mughal service. Aurangzeb, the then viceroy of Deccan, invaded Golconda in early 1656 due to the detention of Mir Jumla’s son by Qutub Shah. Although the invasion was halted on Shah Jahan’s orders, much havoc had been created in Haidarabad and other parts of Golconda. While the Mughal pressure on Karnataka continued. Aurangzeb’s threatening attitude forced Qutub Shah to seek Persian intercession.

The Persian Shah was already maintaining diplomatic relations with Prince Murad Bakhsh and certain other princes and nobles. The declining health of Shah Jahan and the imminent war of succession encouraged the Shah to send an army to Murad who had declared himself an independent ruler on 20 November 1656 and had sent two missions to Shah Abbas II.

The Shah urged the Bijapur and Golconda rulers to sink their differences and jointly exploit the confusion and anarchy prevailing in the Mughal Empire. But the victory of Aurangzeb nipped these plans in the bud. The Shah now hesitated even to assist Dara.

Aurangzeb’s circumspection and experiences with past never allowed him to plunge into ambitious aggressive designs on his North-Western borders or on Qandahar. Nevertheless, the relations between the Mughals and the Persians continued to remain strained.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Give a short account of Humayun’s relations with Shah Tahmasp.

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2) How far do you agree with the view that Mughal relations with Persia revolved round the issue of Qandahar?

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3) Highlight the main stages in the Mughal-Persian relations during Jahangir's reign.

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## **7.6 AURANGZEB AND THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER**

Aurangzeb's hostility towards Deccani kingdoms was further accentuated due to secret negotiations between his brother and the Shah of Persia. Aurangzeb desired recognition from Shah through Zulfiqar Khan — the Persian governor — who immediately sent an envoy in 1660 presumably with the Shah's approval. The Shah's letter referred to ancient ties of friendship and the assistance rendered by the Shahs of Iran to the Mughals and explanations for the conquest of Qandahar. Although a warm welcome was given to the envoy, the tenor of the reply was displeasing. A return embassy was sent under Tarbiyat Khan — the governor of Multan — with a friendly letter treating the Qandahar affairs as a closed chapter. But the relations between the two rulers deteriorated and the impertinence of the envoy (who declined to accompany the Shah to Mazandaran) provided the Shah the opportunity to challenge the Mughal Emperor for a trial of strength. The letter sent by the Shah contained references to Aurangzeb's fratricide and his ineffective government resulting in disorder. The news of the Shah's intended march reached Aurangzeb before the arrival of Tarbiyat Khan. Preparations started for war and an embargo was placed on all kinds of trade with Persia. The governor of Surat was ordered to stop all ships sailing to Persia. But the news of the death of the Shah in 1666 averted the danger. Tarbiyat Khan, however, lost favour and was declined audience for a year because of listening tamely to the Shah's insulting remarks.

The next Persian ruler, Shah Sulaiman (1666-1694), was rather incompetent and his pious and righteous son and successor Sultan Hussain lacked diplomacy and political acumen. Aurangzeb was aware of the difficulties involved in the Qandahar campaign. He assisted the rebel Persian governor of Herat in 1688. He persuaded Prince Muazzam to go to Qandahar as he himself was preoccupied with problems of Jats, Sikhs, Marathas, and, the rebel son Akbar who had crowned himself in 1681. Although Aurangzeb was keen to secure help from the Shah, the latter desisted from it. The diplomatic relations with Abdul Aziz and his brother Subhan Quli of Turan were strengthened and their sectarian affinity was emphasized. The plans of raid on Bala Murghab in 1685 and the proposed anti-Persian alliance and a joint invasion of Iran were also contemplated. Almost simultaneously the Uzbek ruler Abdul Aziz sought friendship of Shah Abbas II. But the Perso-Uzbek alliance could not materialise as Turan was threatened by Urganj and Khwarazm and torn by internal and external dissensions, devoid of a good leadership. The Safavi Empire was also, during this period, in a state of slow but sure dissolution. It was in no position to extend its support to Deccan Kingdoms. By 1687, Aurangzeb managed to destroy the two remaining Deccan kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda and annexed their territories. As no threats existed from Central Asia and Iran, Aurangzeb's position was strengthened.

Thus, Aurangzeb left the Mughal Empire in a 'state of diplomatic isolation' except for an insignificant embassy from Bukhara in 1698. Although Aurangzeb never

dreamt of the recovery of Qandahar, the Mughal-Safavi relations deteriorated gradually and even an embassy from the Ottoman ruler remained unanswered.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) What was the policy of Aurangzeb towards Persia?

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**7.7 LET US SUM UP**

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In this Unit we have discussed Mughal relations with the ruling powers in Central Asia and Persia. The global situation as well as the geographical factors which shaped Mughal foreign policy have been highlighted. The relations of the various Mughal kings towards the Uzbegs of Central Asia and the Persians have been treated separately. In the ultimate analysis, this unit has tried to bring out the geo-political and commercial significance of the North-West frontier, control over which was the bone of contention between the Mughals, Safavis and Uzbegs.

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**7.8 KEY WORDS**

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- Khaqan:** chief of the Khans.  
**Metempsychosis:** a phenomenon which explains the process of the passing of soul after death into another body  
**Nishans:** an order issued by a Prince  
**Qazags:** a tribe

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**7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) See Section 7.1. Your answer should include the following points: Kabul and Qandahar are referred to as twin gates of India leading to Central Asia and Persia; therefore, Akbar was interested in retaining Kabul and Qandahar as bulwarks against external invasions.
- 2) See Section 7.2. Your answer should include the following points: The borders of Uzbek and Safavi states were contiguous. Persia's commercial prosperity and fertility and the fact that it was geo-politically important brought it into conflict with the Uzbegs. Qandahar was the bone of contention between India and Persia due to geo-political, commercial and other reasons.
- 3) See Section 7.2. Your answer should include the following points: After the break-up of the Timurid and Turkoman states two important states came into existence in Central and West Asia, i.e. the Uzbegs and Safavis. They clashed with each other for gaining political and commercial ascendancy over the region.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) See Sub-sec 7.3.2. Your answer should include the following points: In the third phase of the Uzbek-Mughal relations, the Uzbek ruler adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the Mughal. The Mughals around this time conquered Qandahar and felt the need to oppose the Uzbegs.
- 2) See Sub-sec 7.3.4. Your answer should include the following points: The recovery of Qandahar, the reconquest of ancestral land and hegemony over Deccan, etc.



**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) See Section 7.4. Your answer should include the following points: After his expulsion from India Humayun took shelter in Persia and Shah Tahmasp had a sympathetic attitude towards him etc. Although control over Qandahar and sectarian differences were a bottleneck in their relationship, by and large they maintained cordial relations.
- 2) See Section 7.4 and Sub-sec.'s 7.4.2 and 7.4.3. Your answer should include the following points: Humayun conquered Qandahar. After Humayun's death Qandahar was lost to the Persians. Akbar regained it. Persian attempt to recover it failed.
- 3) See Sub-sec 7.4.3. Your answer should include the following points: Persian embassies were sent to the Mughal ruler. Qandahar was lost to Persia. Diplomatic silence maintained by Jahangir.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) See Section 7.6. Your answer should include the following points: Aurangzeb received friendly embassies from the Shah and the Qandahar issue was treated as a closed chapter. Later, relations between the two deteriorated. Inconsistency in the relations should be highlighted.



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## SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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- 1) Rushbrooke Williams: **An Empire Builder of the 16th Century**
- 2) Mohibbul Hasan: **Babur: Founder of the Mughal Empire in India**
- 3) R.P. Tripathi: **Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire**
- 4) S.K. Banerjee: **Humayun Padshah**
- 5) Beni Prasad: **History of Jahangir**
- 6) B.P. Saksena: **History of Shahjahan of Delhi**
- 7) J.N. Sarkar: **History of Aurangzeb's reign – 4 Vols**
- 8) R.C. Verma: **Foreign Policy of the Mughals**
- 9) A.R. Khan: **Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar**
- 10) K.R. Qanungo: **Sher Shah and His Times**



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## UNIT 8 AHMEDNAGAR, BIJAPUR AND GOLKONDA

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### Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
  - 8.1 Introduction
  - 8.2 Ahmednagar
  - 8.3 Bijapur
  - 8.4 Golkonda
  - 8.5 External Relations
    - 8.5.1 Relations with each other
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    - 8.5.3 Relations with Marathas
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  - 8.6 Administrative Structure
    - 8.6.1 Ruling Classes
    - 8.6.2 Central Administration
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  - 8.7 Let Us Sum Up
  - 8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- Appendix—List of Sultans in the Three Kingdoms

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### 8.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit we will discuss the three major kingdoms in Deccan, viz., Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda. After going through this unit, you would be able to know:

- political developments in the kingdoms of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda;
- relations of these kingdoms with each other and other powers of the region;
- nature of the ruling class in these kingdoms; and
- central and provincial administration in the three kingdoms.

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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The disintegration of the Bahmani kingdom gave rise to five independent kingdoms in Deccan, viz., Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Golkonda, Bidar and Berar. In a few years the kingdoms of Bidar and Berar were subdued by their powerful neighbours. The remaining three continued to flourish for almost 100-150 years before they were engulfed by the Mughal empire.

The main focus in this Unit would be on the political developments in these kingdoms. You would know their relations with the Portuguese, the Marathas, and interaction with each other. You would also learn about their administrative set up. During this period these states came into conflict with the Mughals. But this would form the theme of our next Unit. i.e., Unit 9.

## 8.2 AHMEDNAGAR

The Nizam Shahi dynasty of Ahmednagar was founded by Malik Ahmed Nizamul Mulk Bahri in 1490. He was the son of Malik Hasan—the Prime Minister of the Bahmani kingdom.

Malik Hasan started carving out this principality from Konkan and at the time of his death in 1510, the kingdom extended from Bir to Chaul and Ravedanda on the sea-coast and from the frontiers of Khandesh in the north to Poona, Chakan and Sholapur in the south. It included the Daulatabad fort also. This kingdom continued till 1636 when it was annexed by the Mughals.

Throughout this period, the Ahmednagar rulers struggled to protect the territories under their possession from external aggression. At the same time, efforts were made to annex new areas. The biggest success in this direction came when Berar was annexed.

The first set-back to Ahmednagar came in 1511 when she lost Sholapur to Bijapur. Another set-back for Husain Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar came when Golkonda, Bijapur and Vijaynagar joined hands to inflict a humiliating defeat on him, but he managed to secure the kingdom. Soon Husain Nizam Shah married his daughter Chand Bibi to Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur. A little later (1565), Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmednagar and Bidar attacked Vijaynagar. Its ruler Ramaraja was defeated and killed.

Husain died in 1565 and was succeeded by his eldest son Murtaza who ruled till 1588. During the first six years, Murtaza's mother Khunza Humayun controlled the affairs of the kingdom but her repeated military failures against her neighbours led the Nizam Shahi nobility to help Murtaza take reins of administration in his own hands. He retrieved the situation and recovered Udgir from Bijapur. In 1574, Murtaza annexed Berar to his kingdom; in 1588, he was killed by his son Hussain. But the latter was also killed in 1589.

In 1595, Chand Bibi enthroned Bahadur and took the reins in her own hands. She faced the mighty Mughal power, forcing her to cede Berar to the Mughals. The increasing Mughal pressure led Chand Bibi to decide to surrender the Ahmednagar fort. But this resulted in her murder by the nobles and the capture of Ahmednagar fort by the Mughals in 1600. Bahadur Nizam Shah was sent to the Gwalior fort as captive.

Malik Ambar, a Nizam Shahi noble, tried to revive the kingdom by enthroning a member of the royal family as Murtaza Nizam Shah II. He continued to defy the Mughals. In 1610, he killed the intriguing Murtaza and enthroned his son as Burhan Nizam Shah III. During his reign, skirmishes took place between the Nizam Shahi forces and the Portuguese. The Mughal pressure on the Nizam Shahi forces compelled Burhan to conclude peace with the Portuguese. In 1616, the Mughal commander Shah Nawaz Khan ravaged the new Nizam Shahi capital Khirki, but Malik Ambar rehabilitated it and resumed offensive against the Mughals. Later, Prince Khurram forced Malik Ambar to surrender the Ahmednagar fort and the districts of Balaghat. However during 1619-1620, Malik Ambar recovered the lost territories.

Malik Ambar was not only a successful military commander but a very able administrator. He is credited with a number of effective measures concerning revenue and general administration. With his death in 1626, Ahmednagar seems to have lost all hopes.

Now Marathas tried to help Ahmednagar against the Mughals under Shahjahan. Shahji Bhonsle enthroned a member of the royal family as Murtaza Nizam Shah III. Defying the Mughals, he occupied a number of forts. But Shahjahan forced Muhammad Adil Shah to accept defeat in 1636. A settlement was made, according to which, the Nizam Shahi kingdom came to an end. It was divided between the Mughals and Bijapur kingdom. It was settled that the forts of Parenda and Sholapur with their adjoining districts, the province of Kalyani and the Nizam Shahi territory

ween the Bhima and Nira rivers would be taken by Adil Shah of Bijapur and, in return, he would assist the Mughals to bring Shahji to submission. Abdullah Qutb Shah of Golkonda also signed a treaty with the Mughals. Prince Aurangzeb was appointed the governor of the Mughal Deccan. He conquered the Nizam Shahi forts of Udgir and AUSA which completed the extinction of Ahmednagar kingdom. Shahji surrendered Murtaza Nizam Shah III to the Mughals and himself fled to Bijapur. Murtaza was imprisoned in the Gwalior fort and, thus, the Nizam Shahi kingdom came to an end.

### 8.3 BIJAPUR

The independent state of Bijapur was also carved out from the Bahmani kingdom in 1490. Bijapur remained independent till 1686 when it was annexed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. During this period of around 200 years, it was ruled by Adil Shahi kings. Its founder, Yusuf Adil Khan, of Persian descent, was the **tarafdar** (governor) of Bijapur province of the Bahmani kingdom. He declared his independence in 1490. He enlarged his small territory by capturing Raichur, Goa, Dabhol, Gulbarga and Kalyani. But he lost Goa to the Portuguese in 1510. During the period of his successors, efforts were made to retain and keep adding new territories.

Ismail Shah tried to capture Sholapur from Ahmednagar but failed. The major success of Ismail Shah was the capture of Bidar. Amir Barid of Bidar had always been intriguing against Bijapur. Therefore, Ismail marched and captured him alive. Amir Barid had to cede Bidar to Bijapur and was enrolled in the Bijapuri nobility. In 1530, Ismail in alliance with Alauddin Imad Shah recovered Raichur Doab and Mudgal from the Vijaynagar Empire. As a reward, Ismail gave back Bidar to Amir Barid in return for Qandahar and Kalyani. But after his return to Bidar, Amir Barid allied himself with Burhan and refused to give Qandahar and Kalyani. Finally, Ismail attacked and defeated him.

In 1534, Ismail made an abortive attempt to take Kovilkonda and Golkonda from Sultan Quli Qutbul Mulk. After his return to Bijapur, he died the same year. He was succeeded by the elder prince Mallu Adil Khan but, due to his licentious behaviour, he was blinded and imprisoned by his grandmother Punji Khatun in 1535. He died in captivity in 1535. He was succeeded by his younger brother Ibrahim. Ibrahim was forced to give away the ports of Salsette and Bardez to the Portuguese because the latter had already occupied them in 1535 as a price to keep the rebel prince Abdullah in check who had taken shelter in Goa.

Ali Adil Shah I (1556-1580), the next Sultan, captured the Vijaynagar forts of Adoni, Torgal, Dharwar and Bankapur and made an unsuccessful attempt to capture Penukonda, the Vijaynagar's new capital.

Ali Adil Shah I was assassinated in 1580. After him, his minor nephew Ibrahim ascended to the throne; his aunt, Chand Bibi, took charge of him as his guardian. The court politics led to the overthrow of three regents within a period of ten years. The biggest success of Ibrahim Adil Shah was the annexation of the kingdom of Bidar in 1619.

Ibrahim was succeeded by Muhammad Adil Shah (1627-1656). He conquered Tivy, Barder, Sarzora and culture from the Portuguese. During his reign the kingdom reached the zenith of its glory. At the time of his death in 1656, the boundaries of the kingdom extended from the Arabian sea to the Bay of Bengal and the tributes from the subdued **nayaks** compensated for the loss incurred by payments to the Mughals. After Mohammed Adil Shah's death, his son Ali Shah II (1656-1672) succeeded him. During this period, the Mughal and Maratha invasions (See Units 9,10) weakened the kingdom. After his death, his four year old son Sikandar was declared the Sultan (1672-1686). During this period, factional fights, interference by Golkonda and the Marathas and Mughal invasions shattered the kingdom. Finally, in 1686, the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb defeated the Adil Shahi forces and annexed the kingdom to the Mughal Empire.

## **8.4 GOLKONDA**

The founder of the Qutb Shahi dynasty was Sultan Quli who belonged to the Turkman tribe of Qara-Qyunlu. He started to gain power during the reign of the Bahmani Sultan, Shihabuddin Mahmud (1482-1518). He became the governor of the Telingana province with Golkonda as its capital. He never declared his independence but the weakness of the Bahmani Sultan gave him an opportunity to rule independently. He continued hanpura in the west. The Golkonda boundary now touched those of Vijaynagar and Bijapur. He wrested some territory from Orissa and extended his dominion to the Godavari-Krishna doab as far as Ellore and Rajahmundri. The Godavari river was fixed as the frontier between the two states. He captured Kondavidu from the Vijaynagar empire. He frustrated the intentions of Bijapur and Bidar to occupy his territory. He died in 1543. He was succeeded by his son Jamshed Quli Khan whose great achievement was to raise his prestige among the Deccani Sultans by mediating between Ahmednagar and Bijapuri rulers and also by restoring Ali Barid of Bidar to his throne. He died in 1550.

Ibrahim (1550-1580) was the first Qutb Shahi Sultan who formally ruled as an independent king and struck coins in his name. He was succeeded by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (1580-1611). He founded his capital in Hyderabad in 1591. During his reign a number of European factories were established in Golkonda. He died in 1621 and was succeeded by his nephew Muhammad Qutb Shah. The new ruler favoured consolidation rather than expansion. He died in 1626 and was succeeded by his eldest son Abdullah Qutb Shah. One can say that the downward trend of the Qutb Shahi kingdom started from the latter's reign when the Mughal pressure on Golkonda increased. In 1636, he had to sign a "deed of submission" to the Mughals and a covenant by which Golkonda became a vassal to the Mughal empire. Later, he annexed some territories of Karnataka. After his death in 1672, his son-in-law Abdul Hasan (1672-1687) ascended the throne. Finally, the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb annexed Golkonda to the Mughal Empire in 1687.

### **Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Give a brief account of the rise of Ahmednagar as an independent kingdom.

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- 2) How Bijapur succeeded in capturing Bidar?

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- 3) Give a brief account of the extent of Golkonda kingdom.

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## 8.5 EXTERNAL RELATIONS

During the period of their existence, these Deccan kingdoms interacted with each other in various ways. They also came into contact with other south India states, the Mughals, Marathas and European settlements. In this section, we will discuss the nature of these interactions. The details of their relations with the Mughals would be discussed in Unit 9.

### 8.5.1 Relations with Each Other

The nature of interaction between the three major states kept changing according to their individual interests. The major conflicts were for territories. At times two would join hands to oppose the third. On some occasions, some would join hands with the other two smaller kingdoms of Berar and Bidar. Alliances were made even with outside powers to counter each other.

Ahmednagar had its first skirmish against Bijapur for the occupation of Sholapur and lost. During Burhan's rule in Bijapur, Gujarat with the support of Khandesh and Baglana, attacked him. In 1530 Ahmednagar and Bijapur entered into alliance according to which the former annexed Berar and the latter Telangana.

Ismail of Bijapur made alliance with Burhan Nizam Shah I of Ahmednagar. He married his sister Mariam to Burhan and promised Sholapur as dowry. But as he did not give Sholapur to Burhan, relations between them deteriorated. Burhan, in alliance with Alauddin Imad Shah of Berar, tried to snatch away Sholapur by force but was defeated. Henceforth, Sholapur became a bone of contention between the two. In 1526, Burhan, in alliance with Amir Barid, again tried to capture Sholapur but was defeated.

Bijapur's relations with Ahmednagar had worsened because of Sholapur; Burhan's adoption of Shia creed, Ibrahim's profession of Sunni creed and also because Ibrahim had conspired with the rulers of Gujarat and Khandesh for the division of Ahmednagar kingdom. Burhan, in alliance with Amir Barid, invaded Bijapur and recaptured Sholapur in 1542. But Ibrahim, with the help of the ruler of Berar, Darya Imad Shah, forced him to retreat. Amir Barid's death in 1543 led Burhan to sue for peace and to return Sholapur to Ibrahim.

In 1543, Ahmednagar, Golkonda, Bidar, Berar and Vijaynagar all joined against Bijapur. But soon this alliance broke up and Golkonda, Vijaynagar and Bijapur started opposing Ahmednagar. Finally, Husain Shah of Bijapur concluded a peace with Ramaraj of Vijaynagar. The terms were: i) cessation of Kalyani by Husain to Bijapur; ii) Husain should put Jahangir Khan—the Imad Shahi general—to death as he had been very active in war, and iii) Husain should pay a visit to Vijaynagar to receive a *pan* (betal-leaf) from Ramaraja's hands. Soon after, this alliance came to an end. In 1619, Ibrahim Adil Shah annexed the kingdom of Bidar. Ahmednagar and Bijapur again went through a series of conflicts. Finally, Ahmednagar succeeded in capturing Sholapur in 1625.

The fighting between various factions of the Bijapuri nobles and the invasions of Shivaji and the Mughals put the Bijapur state in perpetual danger of annihilation. Moreover, the treasury also was empty. On the request of the Bijapur ruler, Qutb Shah gave loan to Bijapur but appointed Akanna, the brother of Qutb Shah Peshwa Madanna, as advisor at the Bijapur court. This marked the peak of the Qutb Shahi influence in Bijapur. Towards the close of the 16th century, Bijapur, Golkonda and Ahmednagar joined hands against the Mughals in the battle of Sonapat in 1597 but were defeated.

### 8.5.2 Relations with Vijaynagar

The Deccan states and Vijaynagar had hostile relations. But at times one state would take the help of Vijaynagar against the other. Bijapur was the first state to come in clash with Vijaynagar.

The civil strife in Bijapur, the instigation by the Portuguese and also by Amir Barid of Bidar, led Krishnadeva Raya of Vijaynagar to capture Raichur doab from Bijapur in 1512. In 1520, Ismail tried to recover Raichur doab but was routed.

In 1543, the Deccan states with Vijaynagar forged an alliance against Bijapur. The Vijaynagar took back Raichur doab and Ahmednagar took Sholapur. A little later, Vijaynagar, Bijapur and Golkonda joined hands against Ahmednagar. They besieged Ahmednagar and defeated her. Mutual bickerings and warfare among the Deccan Sultans made Ramaraj of Vijaynagar very strong and he adopted a dictatorial attitude towards the former. This led them to form a confederacy against him.

Negotiations for unity took place. Husain Nizam Shah married his daughter Chand Bibi to Ali Adil Shah I and gave the fort of Sholapur as dowry. Ali Adil Shah I married his sister to Murtaza, son of Husain Nizam Shah. His another daughter was married to Ibrahim Qutb Shah. Then they made preparations for war against Vijaynagar empire. To find a pretext for war, Ali Adil Shah I sent an envoy to Ramaraj to demand the return of the forts of Yadgir, Bagalkot, Raichur and Mudgal which the latter had occupied during the last few years. Ramaraja refused to comply and turned out the Adil Shahi envoy from the court. This led the allies, i.e., Husain Nizam Shah, Ibrahim Qutb Shah, Ali Adil Shah and Ali Barid to move towards Vijaynagar. A battle took place on 23rd January 1565 at Bannihatti or Talikota (a place between two villages named Rakshasa and Tangandi). The Vijaynagar army was routed and Ramaraja was killed. After this, the Vijaynagar empire lost its power and glory.

### 8.5.3 Relations with Marathas

Among the three Deccan states under study, Ahmednagar never had conflict of any significance with the Marathas. But Bijapur and Golkonda came forward as contenders. Here we will trace briefly their conflicts and clashes (for details see Unit 10).

From 1650 onwards, Shivaji started his military offensive inside Bijapur territory. Between 1650 and 1656, he captured Purandar, Kalyani, Bhiwandi, Mahuli, Javli, Shrinagarpur and Rairi. Thus he became master of practically the whole of north-western corner of Adil Shahi kingdom except the Konkan ports.

In 1659, Shivaji murdered the Bijapur noble Afzal Khan, captured Panhala and other fortresses on the western coast and, in 1660, captured Dabhol. Kolhapur also fell to him but he lost Panhala to Bijapur the same year. Then peace was restored between Adil Shah and Shivaji resulting in the confirmation of all his conquests in the north-western part of Bijapur kingdom; Shivaji on his part agreed not to invade Bijapur. But Shivaji did not keep his promise.

In 1665, the Mughals under the command of Jai Singh made an abortive attempt to conquer Bijapur. Meanwhile, by the treaty of Purandar between Shivaji and the Mughals, the former was permitted to make incursions into Bijapur. When Ali Adil Shah II saw that the Mughals were behind Shivaji, he thought that it was not possible to continue the struggle. Accordingly, a treaty was made by which Sholapur with its adjoining territory was given to the Mughals. Thus Shivaji's incursions stopped.

After the death of Ali Adil Shah II in 1672, his four years old son Sikandar ascended the throne. Shivaji took full advantage of the disturbed conditions in Bijapur. In 1673, he occupied Panhala, Parli, Satara, and raided and plundered Hubli.

Due to the strife between the Afghan and **Dakhani** nobles of Bijapur, Shivaji was able to raid Bijapur territory. He captured Phonda, Sunda, Karwar, Ankola and Kadra in 1675. After that, Shivaji made an alliance with Qutb Shah who agreed to pay to Shivaji a monthly subsidy of Rupees 4.5 lakh till the end of military expedition against Bijapur. He also agreed to help him with a contingent of 5000 troopers. Shivaji promised to divide his proposed conquests which did not constitute his father's jagir. Shivaji then took Jinji and Vellore, captured the territory up to the north of Coleroon river and then returned to Belgaum.



At the same time, Shivaji made inroads in Golkonda also. He visited Abul Hasan Qutb Shah in 1677 and they signed a treaty according to which (i) Qutb Shah was to pay a subsidy of 3000 huns per day as long as the campaign to take possession of his father's jagirs lasted; (ii) Shivaji, after the end of the campaign, was to hand over to Qutb Shah those parts of Karnataka which did not belong to Shivaji's father.

### 8.5.4 Relations with Europeans

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to come into contact with Deccan states. They were followed by the Dutch and English. You have already studied in Block 1 how the Portuguese established themselves at Goa and adjoining regions. In the process, they came in clash with Deccan states.

Soon after the formation of Ahmednagar, its Sultan Nizam Shah had to face the Portuguese threat. He tried to expel the Portuguese from the western coast. Two battles took place against them. The naval forces of Egypt and Gujarat, with the permission of Nizam Shah, came to Chaul and defeated them in 1508. But next year the Portuguese defeated the combined fleet of Egypt and Gujarat. A peace treaty was signed between the Portuguese and Nizam Shah on the following terms: (a) Nizam Shah should pay 30,000 cruzados as war indemnity; (b) he should promise the payment of 10,000 cruzados as annual subsidy. But Nizam Shah paid only 2,000 cruzados.

His successor Burhan Shah also tried to keep good relations with the Portuguese. In order to checkmate the Gujarat and Khandesh rulers, he entered into an alliance with the Portuguese and permitted them to construct forts at Ravedanda and Chaul.

The rulers of Bijapur, Ahmednagar and the Zamorin of Calicut allied themselves against the Portuguese and tried to drive them away from the western coast but failed. In 1571, Bijapur and Ahmednagar signed a treaty with the Portuguese.

But, after some time, Ahmednagar again clashed with the Portuguese. The provocation was that the Portuguese attacked on the ships bringing pilgrims from Mecca. Bijapur was also hostile towards the Portuguese and was looking for an opportunity.

During the reign of Muhammad Adil Shah, the Dutch appeared on the western coast of India for trade and the Bijapur ruler, in order to win them over against the Portuguese, allied himself with them. He granted them some trade concessions and permitted them to build their factory at Vengurla. He conquered the Portuguese possessions of Tivy, Bardes, Sarzora and Cultuly. But the Portuguese reinforcement led Bijapur to withdraw from there. Golkonda also came into contact with the Europeans.

The Dutch, the English and the French had also started their mercantile activities in India. Golkonda allowed the Dutch to establish their factories at Masulipatam and Nizamapatam, followed by the Pulicat factory in 1610. The English East India Company established its factories at Masulipatam and Nagapatam in 1611 and at Pulicat in 1621.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1) Give a brief account of the relations of Deccan states with Vijaynagar.

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2) Discuss Shivaji's relations with Bijapur.

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- 3) Give a brief account of Portuguese relations with Ahmednagar.

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## 8.6 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

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As we have already discussed, all the Deccan states were part of the erstwhile Bahmani state. Therefore, they bore Bahmani influence in their administrative set up. A number of Bahmani institutions and practices continued with some changes.

All the three states had more or less uniform system of administration. However, we will indicate the differences wherever needed. Let us begin with the ruling classes of these states.

### 8.6.1 Ruling Classes

The ruling classes in the Deccan states consisted of groups of nobles who came from various backgrounds. There were two broad categories which were continuing from the Bahmani empire. These were the Dakhanis and Afaqis or Pardesis (for details, see Unit 28 of course EHI-03).

The Dakhanis were also originally from outside but had settled in Deccan long back and included Hindu converts also. The prominent examples of the latter are Fathullah Imad Shah, the founder of the Imad Shahi dynasty in Berar and Ahmed Nizam Shah who established the sultanate of Ahmednagar. Both of these were Brahmin converts.

Afaqis or Pardesis were new arrivals. They continued to come to these states throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Yusuf Adil Shah, the founder of Adil Shahi state of Bijapur, was also an Afaqis.

Most of the Afaqis were shia while most of the Dakhanis were sunni. Within these two broad categories were a number of subgroups. The important ones were Persians, Turks, Arabs, Abyssinians (**Habashis**), Egyptians, and Indian converts. Some Marathas were also taken into service who became a part of the nobility (for Marathas, see Unit 10).

All the administrative responsibilities for military, police and revenue functions were performed by these ruling classes. The nobles at the centre or districts enjoyed powers as long as the Sultan wished. The Sultan, therefore, demanded personal loyalty. All the positions were subject to demotion, transfer and supervision by the Sultan or the "prime minister". The nobles were paid through assignment of jagirs for themselves and for their troops.

This heterogenous group of nobles; because of various pulls and pressures, was in conflict with each other and at times with the Sultan too. Whenever they got an opportunity, they tried to push up the candidates of their choice for the post of Sultan. A few examples would be enough to show this.

At the time of accession of Burhan Shah in 1510 the conflict surfaced. After him his son Burhan who was a minor succeeded him. Mukammal Khan, who belonged to the Dakhani faction of the nobility and was the wakil and peshwa during Ahmad's reign, continued in that office. As Burhan was a child, Mukammal Khan exercised full authority. This led the faction of the Afaqis (mainly Persian and Turkish) to make an

Burhan, on the persuasion of Shah Tahir (a newly arrived **shia** theologian from Persia) not only himself became **shia** but also declared **shiaism** as state religion. The **sunni** nobles made an attempt to overthrow Burhan and enthrone his **sunni** son Abdul Qadir. The neighbouring rulers also invaded Ahmednagar but failed to secure anything. However, in 1589, a group of nobles succeeded in raising the man of their choice to the throne.

The new ruler Ismail, son of Burhan and the grandson of Husain Nizam Shah I, was enthroned mainly by the **Afaqis**. But then the leader of the **Dakhani**s Jamal Khan, who was a Mahdavi, revolted and acquired supremacy over the former. He also declared Mahdavia faith as state religion. Again, after the death of Ibrahim Nizam Shah (1595), the factional fight between the **Dakhani**s and **Habashis** (Abyssinians) at Ahmednagar court became very intense.

Miyan Manjhu, the **peshwa** and leader of the **Dakhani** group, enthroned one Ahmad of doubtful lineage. Ikhlas Khan, the leader of the **Habashis** championed the cause of one Moti Shah—a child whom he had picked up from the market. Abhang Khan, another leader sponsored the cause of Ali, the son of Burhan Nizam Shah, while Chand Bibi—the daughter of Husain Nizam Shah I and the widow of Ali Adil Shah—I supported Bahadur's claim who was the infant son of Ibrahim Nizam Shah. Miyan Manjhu invited Prince Murad and Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan—the Mughal governor of Gujarat and Malwa respectively—to help him. They were already prepared for this. Raja Ali Khan also on Akbar's instructions joined them. But by the time the Mughal army could reach Ahmednagar, Manjhu had gained victory against the Abyssinians. Now he repented for his folly of inviting the Mughals, patched up with his rivals including Chand Bibi, invited Bijapur and Golkonda rulers to join him against the Mughals and then went towards Bijapur and Golkonda to expedite the despatch of their force. In his absence, Chand Bibi enthroned Bahadur and governed the state well.

After the death of Malik Amber, the nobles clashed again. His son Fath Khan succeeded him as **wakil** and **peshwa**, but his haughtily and vindictive nature intensified jealousy amongst the **Dakhani**s and **Habashis** which led them to join the Mughals in large numbers.

Similar was the situation in Bijapur after the death of Sultan Yusuf Adil Khan (1510). As his son and successor Ismail was a child, Kamal Khan became his regent. He encouraged the **Dakhani**s, suppressed the **Afaqis** and disbanded them completely, abolished **shia'ism** as state religion and proclaimed the **sunni** creed in its place. Then he tried to usurp the crown himself but was killed due to a palace intrigue hatched by the mother and aunt of the young Ismail.

After him, the domination of the **Dakhani**s in the Bijapur nobility came to an end. The **Afaqis** were recalled from Gujarat where they had taken shelter and **shia'ism** again became the state religion.

In Bijapur, Sultan Ibrahim Shah tried to suppress his nobles. He adopted **sunni** creed as official religion and dismissed a large number of **Afaqis** who went over to Ahmednagar and Vijaynagar.

After Ibrahim's death, his son reversed his policy. Ali succeeded Ibrahim Adil Shah in 1558, declared **shia'ism** and favoured **Afaqis** in his service. To recover Kalyani and Sholapur, he formed an alliance with Vijaynagar against Ahmednagar, and, for that purpose even went to Vijaynagar.

During the reign of Muhammad Adil Shah, who had succeeded Ibrahim, the **Dakhani** faction of the nobility became powerful because it was instrumental in enthroning the new ruler.

### 8.6.2 Central Administration

All the power and authority of the state were in the hands of the Sultan. In all the Deccan kingdoms, the Sultan was considered the supreme commander of the army

and the chief executive of the state. The position of Sultan was hereditary in actual practice. Even in cases where direct descendant was not available, the succession would go to a person of the same family. In cases where the successors were minor, the states were ruled in their names by a Regent exercising royal powers. Since all power rested with the Sultan, the administration was highly centralised. There were a number of departments of the state to run the administration.

The states had two types of administrative set up: i) the Central Administration and ii) Provincial and local administration. Here we will briefly discuss the main administrative organs of the Deccan states.

### The Council

The nobles, **ulema** (religious men), some officials and friends of Sultan formed sort of an advisory body or council of the Sultan. In Bijapur and Golkonda this body seems to have a more formal status. In the former it was called **Majlis Khalwat** and in the latter **Majlis Diwan Dari** or **Majlis Khas**. The council lacked any formal structure. Prominent persons, as long as they enjoyed the favour of the Sultan, were invited to it. Sultan would take the advice of the council on all important matters.

### Central Ministers

For administrative purposes, there were various departments to look after different functions. Each big department was headed by a minister. The number of departments and ministers was not fixed and kept changing. Generally, all ministers, except the **Qazi** (head of the judiciary), carried military ranks. Policy decisions were generally taken by the Sultan while the ministers were supposed to carry them out.

### Peshwa and Wakil al Sultanat

The highest ministerial office in the Deccan states was known by any of above two designations; sometimes the two titles were combined in one. More commonly used title was **wakil al sultanat** in Bijapur. There the title of **peshwa** was used only once when Afzal Khan was appointed **peshwa** by Ibrahim Adil Shah. While in Golkonda and Ahmednagar **peshwa** was used, in Ahmednagar generally **Peshwa** and **Wakil** was the same person who was considered highest officer. In Golkonda the term **Wakil** was rarely used. These were the highest offices after Sultan and commanded lot of powers. All the matters of state were routed through them. In Bijapur as many as six Sultans were minor and **wakil-al Sultanat** worked as the regent. In Ahmednagar also the **Wakil** worked as regent in case of a minor Sultan. They were in charge of general administration, framed rules and regulations and at times controlled revenue and military affairs.

**Mir Jumla or Jumlatul Mulk** : In Bijapur and Golkonda, **Mir Jumla** was considered an important minister next to **Wakil**. In Bijapur at times the same person held the post of **Wakil** and **Mir Jumla** (e.g., Asad Khan during the rule of Ibrahim Adil Shah; Mustafa Khan and Afzal Khan during Adil Shah I's rule and Ikhlas Khan and Dilawar Khan during Ibrahim II's rule). The holder of this office was to look after financial and revenue matters. In Bijapur, another officer with the title of **Mustaufi al mulk** was to assist **Mir Jumla** in revenue matters. A large number of subordinate staff was to help them, most of whom were Hindus. In Ahmednagar financial and revenue matters were taken care of by **wazir** who was assisted by **diwan** (for rules and regulations) and **nazirs** (revenue superintendent for collection).

### Intelligence Department

Its functions were to collect information and submit them to the Sultan. In times of war, information about enemy movements was also collected.

### Military Administration

As described earlier, the ruler was the supreme commander of the army. The department was looked after by **Wakil** or **Pashwa**. Recruitment, training, supervision and supply of arms and ammunitions to the army was its main function. An army was maintained directly by the state. While, as mentioned in sub-section 8.6.1, the nobles or **jagirdars** or provincial officials also maintained troops. At the time of war,

people were specially recruited but were relieved after war. Such soldiers were of two types: **bargis** were those who were paid and given horses and other equipments by the state, and **silahdar** were those who had their own horses and equipments and were brought by their group leaders. They were paid in lump sum.

The main branches were cavalry, infantry, artillery and also navy to take care of coastline. But the last one was very small and was not much of a fighting force. Important forts were placed under **sar naik**. The troops maintained by **jagirdars** were subjected to inspection by the military department. The soldiers consisted of various ethnic background such as Persians, Turks, Afghans, Abyssinians, and Indians (both Hindus and Muslims).

### Law and Justice

There was a separate department to administer religious endowments, grants, law and justice. It was headed by a senior **qazi**. Generally, separate civil laws were applied to persons of various religious groups. The Sultan also decided cases. In criminal matters a mix of Islamic, local and state laws were in practice.

### Other Important Functionaries

In Golkonda, the Peshwa's office was an elaborate one with a central office under **dabir** or secretary. Besides, the office had two main secretaries: i) **Munshi ul-Mumalik** or chief secretary. He also worked as **majmuahdar** or Accountant general and ii) **dabir** or **Farman-i Hindawi** whose job was to correspond in local languages. The post was held by a Hindu officer.

There was a department which looked after the relations with other states. Exchange of envoys between the states was a common practice. Correspondence with other states and deputation of envoys fell within the jurisdiction of this department.

### 8.6.3 Provincial and Local Administration

In the beginning of the Unit, we have discussed how the provinces of the Bahmani kingdom emerged as independent Deccan states. Under the Bahmanis, these provinces were called **tarf** and their governors as **tarfdar**. But administration at this level was not well-structured, nor the sub-divisions were clearly standardized. Tieffenthaler (17th century) mentions eleven divisions in Bijapur: Bijapur, Denghi, Ossa, Sholapur, Dhar, Sikhar, Lakmis, Gadak, Bahor, Badam, Konkan, (8 **parganas**). After the annexation of Bidar the number moved to 15. Only Goa's Ainul Mulk was considered as provincial governor. According to D.C. Verma (**History of Bijapur**), there were three types of provincial administration in Bijapur: i) crown lands under officers who were placed under Mir Jumla; ii) **Jagirs** given to **Jagirdars** who were to maintain troops, collect revenue and maintain law & order, and iii) tributary chiefs who were autonomous for administering but paid a fixed tribute and supplied soldiers at the time of war.

In crown lands, officers were liable to be transferred. They exercised civil, military and judicial powers. There were four types of officers in each **sarkar**: i) **Sarhavaladar** or **subedar** was the chief administrator; ii) officials to collect revenue; iii) to maintain accounts; and iv) **Qazi**.

**Sarkars** were further divided into **parganas**. In the latter, the collection of revenue was done by **deshmukh** while **desai** maintained accounts. Generally the officers in **sarkars** and **parganas** were referred to as **huddidar**, **adhikari**, **amaldar** or **amil**. The smallest unit was village. Here, the **patel** was the headman who collected revenue and was also chief police and judicial officer. **Kulkarni** was the office of the accountant. Both were paid through **inam** (gift) lands. The village watchman was called **mahar**. Every village had a number of artisans called **Balutedar** or **Barabalute**. For example, potter, **mang** (menial work), **qurov** (incharge of temple or village deity), goldsmith, carpenter, and blacksmith. The number in each category varied according to the needs of the village. They were to provide services to the village folk and were paid by **Baluta** or share of grain at harvest time.

In Ahmednagar it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of provinces. The main divisions were Bir, Berar, Junnar, and Chaul. Each was placed under a provincial

governor or noble on the lines of **tarfs** of the Bahmani state. These nobles were the executive and judicial heads, they maintained troops and looked after law and order. Each province was divided into **sarkars**, **parganas** and villages.

In each **sarkar** there were **faujdars**, **qazis** and **kotwals**, treasurer and revenue collectors. Similarly, each **sarkar** was divided into **parganas**, or **mahals** or **kuryat**. Each **pargana** consisted of a number of villages. The village level administration was done with the help of **panchayat**. Revenue collection was done by an officer called **deshpande**.

In Golkonda also well defined provinces are absent. The divisions of the state were called by a new term **simt** and the chief administrator was called **sarsimt**. According to H.K. Sharwani (**History of the Qutbshahi Dynasty**), **simt** was more of a district than a province. Another officer was called **hawaladar** who was responsible for the collection of local taxes. In their territories, the **jagirdars** were responsible for collection of revenue, law and order and maintenance of troops.

### Check Your Progress 3

1) Write two lines on each of the following nobles:

a) **Dakhnis**

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b) **Afaqis**

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2) Give a brief description of the work of the following ministers:

a) **Peshwa**

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b) **Mir Jumla**

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3) Write two lines on each of the following:

a) **Balutedar**

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b) **Administrative functionaries of sarkar**

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## 8.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, we studied the history of the three kingdoms of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda. The three kingdoms were constantly at war with each other to strengthen their positions. Towards the end of the 16th century the Mughals turned their attention on these kingdoms. A series of conflicts took place. Ahmednagar was the first kingdom to be annexed by the Mughals. By the last quarter of the 17th century Bijapur and Golkonda were also annexed by the Mughals. The Marathas emerged as an important political force in the Deccan region. During this period Portuguese and other European powers also made inroads into this region.

We also studied the administrative set up of these kingdoms. The administration was a mix of institutions of Delhi Sultanate and Deccan. Later some Mughal practices also found their way in these kingdoms.

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## 8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) You have to discuss the early phase of the rise of Ahmednagar kingdom, see Section 8.2.
- 2) After a number of conflicts Bijapur succeeded in annexing Bidar in 1619. For details see Section 8.3.
- 3) Golkonda was the most prominent kingdom of Deccan and had a large area under it, see Section 8.4.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The Deccan kingdoms had constant conflicts with Vijaynagar. At times they fought individual battles and some times joined hands against Vijaynagar, see Sub-section 8.5.2.
- 2) Shivaji indulged in a number of conflicts with Bijapur. He also succeeded in capturing a few territories. For details See Sub-section 8.5.3.
- 3) The Portuguese and Ahmednagar were constantly clashing with each other for the supremacy on western coast. see Sub-section 8.5.4.

### Check Your Progress 3

You have to provide small answers to the questions given here. We suggest you to read Section 8.6. and write the answers in your own words.

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## Appendix

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### The List of Sultans in the three Kingdoms of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda

#### i) The Nizam Shahi Kingdom of Ahmednagar

1. Ahmad Nizam Shah Bahri (1496-1510)
2. Burhan Nizam Shah I (1510-1553)
3. Husain Nizam Shah I (1553-1565)
4. Murtaza Nizam Shah II (1565-1588)
5. Husain Nizam Shah II (1588-1589)
6. Ismail Nizam Shah I (1589-1591)
7. Burhan Nizam Shah II (1591-1595)

8. Ibrahim Nizam Shah I (April-Aug. 1595)
9. Ahmad Nizam Shah II (Aug-Dec: 1595)
10. Bahadur Nizam Shah I (1595-1600)
11. Murtaza Nizam Shah II (1600-1610)
12. Burhan Nizam Shah III (1610-1631)
13. Husain Nizam Shah III (1631-1633)
14. Murtaza Nizam Shah III (1633-1636)

**ii) The Adil Shahi Kingdom of Bijapur**

1. Yusuf Adil Khan (1489/90-1510)
2. Ismail Adil Khan (1510-1534)
3. Mallu Adil Khan (1534-1535)
4. Ibrahim Adil Shah I (1535-1558)
5. Ali Adil Shah I (1558-1580)
6. Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1627)
7. Muhammed Adil Shah (1627-1656)
8. Ali Adil Shah II (1565-1672)
9. Sikandar Adil Shah (1672-1686)

**iii) The Qutb Shahi dynasty of Golkonda**

1. Sultan Quli Qutbul Mulk (d. 1543)
2. Yar Quli Jamshed (1543-1550)
3. Subhan (1550)
4. Ibrahim Qutb Shah (1550-1580)
5. Muhammad Quli Shah (1580-1611)
6. Muhammad Qutb Shah (1611-1626)
7. Abdullah Qutb Shah (1626-1672)
8. Abul Hasan Qutb Shah (1672-1687)



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# UNIT 9 THE DECCAN STATES AND THE MUGHALS

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## Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Akbar and the Deccan States
- 9.3 Jahangir and the Deccan States
- 9.4 Shah Jahan and the Deccan States
- 9.5 Aurangzeb and the Deccan States
- 9.6 An Assessment of the Mughal Policy in the Deccan
- 9.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.8 Key Words
- 9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 9.0 OBJECTIVES

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The relations between the Deccan states and the Mughals have been discussed in the present Unit. This Unit would introduce you to:

- the policy pursued by different Mughal Emperors towards the Deccan states;
- the factors that determined the Deccan policy of the Mughals, and
- the ultimate outcome of the struggle between the Mughals and the Deccan states.

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## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Unit 8 of this Block you have learnt how the independent Sultanates of Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Golkonda, Berar and Bidar had been established in the Deccan. We have already discussed the development of these states and their relations to each other (Unit 8). Here our focus would be on the Mughal relations with the Deccan states. The Deccan policy of the Mughals was not determined by any single factor. The strategic importance of the Deccan states and the administrative and economic necessity of the Mughal empire largely guided the attitude of the Mughal rulers towards the Deccan states.

Babar, the first Mughal ruler, could not establish any contact with Deccan because of his pre-occupations in the North. Still, his conquest of Chanderi in 1528 had brought the Mughal empire close to the northern confines of Malwa. Humayun also could not find enough time because of his involvement in Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal to devote himself in the Deccan affairs in spite of repeated appeals from Burhan Nizam Shah I. In this way, Akbar was the first Mughal emperor who wished to extend the Mughal suzerainty over the Deccan states.

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## 9.2 AKBAR AND THE DECCAN STATES

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Akbar wanted the Deccan rulers to accept his overlordship. It was during the campaigns in Gujarat during 1572-73 that Akbar, after being fully secured in the North, made up his mind for the conquest of the Deccan states because the rebels, driven out of Gujarat, used to take refuge in Khandesh, Ahmednagar and Bijapur. Moreover, with the conquest of Gujarat, Akbar wished to assume the rights which

the previous rulers of Gujarat had enjoyed in relation to the Deccan states, i.e., the rights of overlordship. Since 1417, the Deccan states had acknowledged the supremacy of the Sultans of Gujarat, had read *khutba* in their names and had paid them annual tribute. Internal conflict among the Deccan states also motivated the Mughal ruler to intervene in their affairs. Akbar's desire to protect the trade route towards the Gujarat sea-ports and to establish his domination there was one of the important factors that guided his Deccan policy. Besides, the Portuguese had established themselves very well on the Western coast of India and had emerged as a force to reckon with. Akbar wanted to assert Mughal suzerainty over the Deccan states in order to drive the Portuguese away from the western coast of India.

The first contact between Akbar and the Deccan states was established after 1561 when Akbar, after the conquest of Malwa, ordered its governor Pir Muhammad to subdue Asirgarh and Burhanpur where the former ruler of Malwa, Baz Bahadur, had taken refuge. After capturing Bijagarh, he advanced towards Asirgarh where the ruler of Khandesh, Miran Mubarak Shah II and Baz Bahadur of Malwa, were preparing to resist the Mughals. Mubarak Shah appealed to Tufal Khan of Berar for help who joined him. The allies marched against Pir Muhammad and defeated the Mughals at Bijagarh. Akbar himself marched to Mandu to control the situation. This alarmed Miran Mubarak Shah who sent envoys to Akbar and apologised for his conduct. He married one of his daughters to the Emperor, acknowledged Akbar's overlordship, read *khutba* in his name and gave Bijagarh and Handia in dowry to his daughter.

During the ten years following the annexation of Malwa by Akbar in 1562, the struggles that took place in the Deccan attracted Akbar's attention. In 1574, Murtaza Nizam Shah I invaded Berar. Tufal Khan fled to Burhanpur and sought Akbar's help offering Berar to him and requested him to send his officers to take charge of administration. But as Miran Mubarak Shah did not want to annoy Murtaza Nizam Shah I, he did not want Tufal Khan to stay in Burhanpur for a long period. Tufal fled to Berar. Akbar sent an envoy to Murtaza and asked him to desist from annexing Berar, but no attention was paid to the message and Berar was taken by Murtaza.

In 1586, the younger brother of Murtaza, namely Burhan fled to the court of Akbar and sought his help in capturing the throne, while Burhan on his part promised to acknowledge Akbar's suzerainty. Akbar ordered the governor of Malwa, Mirza Aziz Koka and Raja Ali Khan, to help Burhan. On reaching the borders of Berar, Burhan told Aziz Koka to withhold as the arrival of a large army would create reaction among the Deccanis against him. Aziz Koka complied with this request. Burhan captured the throne in 1591 but as he had occupied it without any direct help of the Mughals he refused to accept Akbar's suzerainty.

In 1591, Akbar sent four diplomatic missions to the four rulers of the Deccan in order to find out the real state of affairs there and also to see whether they were willing to acknowledge his suzerainty. Only Raja Ali Khan reaffirmed the acknowledgement of Akbar's supremacy and sent his daughter with choice gifts for Prince Salim. The reports about other rulers were not favourable. Almost all the chroniclers say that Akbar decided to launch the military offensive at this juncture when his diplomatic mission failed.

Burhan Nizam Shah was succeeded by his eldest son Ibrahim in 1595, but the latter was killed the same year in a battle against Bijapur. His death led to chaos in the state of Ahmednagar. There were four parties each having its own candidate for the Nizam Shahi throne. The *peshwa* of Ibrahim Nizam Shah and leader of the **Dakhni** group of nobles in the court, namely Miyan Manjhu, declared one Ahmed of dubious lineage as the new King. Ikhlas Khan who was the leader of the Abyssinian group declared one Moti Shah as member of the Nizam Shahi family and proclaimed him new Nizam Shah. Chand Bibi, the sister of Burhan II, espoused the cause of Bahadur, the infant son of Ibrahim Nizam Shah. Ashang Khan Habashi—another leader of the Abyssinian group—supported—the claim of Ali, the son of Burhan Nizam Shah-I. Ikhlas Khan mastered a large army and forced Miyan Manjhu to take shelter in the fort of Ahmednagar. The latter appealed to Prince Murad, the Mughal Governor of Gujarat, for help. As Khandesh could serve as a base of operations, so the Mughals won Raja Ali Khan by ceding to him the district of Nandurbar in

Gujarat. Moreover, the presence of Mughal forces near Khandesh forced him to join the Mughals. The Mughals besieged Ahmednagar fort in 1595. Miyan Manjhu later repented his invitation to Prince Murad and proceeded to Ausa to seek help from Bijapur and Golkonda. In his absence, Chand Bibi succeeded in securing the defence of Ahmednagar fort in her own hands, proclaimed Bahadur as the new King and got the Khutba read in his name.

Ikhlas Khan and Abhang Khan tried to help Chand Bibi but were defeated by the Mughals and they fled to Bijapur. But the siege prolonged due to mutual dissensions among the Mughal commanders. As Bijapur had sent reinforcements to Ahmednagar and the Mughal forces had become worried of the siege, they opened negotiations with the besieged. A treaty was signed between the Mughals and Chand Bibi. The terms were: Berar would be ceded to the Mughals; Bahadur would be recognised as new Nizam Shah and a vassal of the Mughal Emperor. The treaty however failed to bring peace and the Mughal attack against Ahmednagar continued. In 1600, Chand Bibi ultimately decided to surrender the fort and retire to Junnar with Bahadur.

Bahadur Shah of Khandesh was not happy with the Mughals. Akbar arrived at Burhanpur in 1600; Bahadur instead of receiving the emperor retired to Asirgarh. Akbar had ordered Abul Fazl to contact Bahadur and offer him pardon for his sins of omissions. But Abul Fazl could not succeed in this exercise. Akbar besieged the fort and conquered it in 1601. Bahadur surrendered to Akbar and Khandesh became a Mughal province.

The fall of Ahmednagar and Asirgarh frightened the other Deccani rulers. The rulers of Bijapur, Golkonda and Bidar sent envoys to Akbar who were graciously received by him. Akbar also sent his envoys to them. Akbar deputed Khan Khana, one of his close confidants, to look after the Deccan affairs. Once Akbar left the Deccan for Agra in 1601, the Nizam Shahi nobles rallied around Malik Ambar. Malik Ambar, after the fall of Ahmednagar, had enthroned Murtaza, the grandson of Burhan Nizam Shah-I, and became his *peshwa*. He made Khirki the new capital of the state and adopted guerilla tactics to attack the Mughal forces. The challenge posed by Malik Ambar and Raju Deccani, mutual bickerings and rivalries among the Mughal generals as well as the prevailing situation in the North persuaded Akbar to adopt diplomatic manouvers rather than military might to consolidate Mughal authority in the Deccan.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (X).
  - i) Akbar was the first Mughal ruler who extended Mughal authority over the Deccan states.
  - ii) Internal conflict in Ahmednagar made it vulnerable to Mughal intervention.
  - iii) Akbar failed to establish his control over Ahmednagar fort.
  - iv) It was the religious zeal of Akbar that persuaded him to extend Mughal suzerainty over the Deccan states.

- 2) Write in five sentences the factors that motivated Akbar to intervene in the Deccan.

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**9.3 JAHANGIR AND THE DECCAN STATES**

Jahangir intended to follow Akbar's expansionist policy in the Deccan. But Jahangir failed to achieve his objective in the Deccan because:

- he could not whole heartedly devote himself to this task;
- the court intrigues and jealousies of the Mughal nobles found Deccan a place for a free play of their emotions, and
- superior generalship of Malik Ambar.

During the first three years, the Deccanis regained half of Balaghat and many districts of Ahmednagar. Abdurrahim Khan Khana was sent to the Deccan in 1608 but he suffered discomfiture and the Deccanis captured entire Balaghat and many other imperial outposts. Jahangir appointed Prince Parvez to lead the Deccan campaign in 1610, but the Mughals failed to make any headway and even lost Ahmednagar fort together with half of the Mughal possessions in Ahmednagar. Asaf Khan, being charged of taking bribe from the Nizam Shahis, requested Jahangir to assume command. Jahangir contemplated this but on the suggestions of Khan Jahan Lodi, he ordered him to proceed to the Deccan. Rivalry between Khan Khanan and Khan Jahan Lodi led, on the request of the latter, to the recall of Khan Khanan to the Imperial court.

The successful conclusion of the Mewar campaign gave an element of strength to Jahangir and he became relatively more free to deal with the Deccan. But all the attempts at Mughal advancement into the Deccan miserably failed. Khan Khanan was again sent to the Deccan in 1612. By this time, Khan Khanan's rivals had either been transferred from the Deccan or had died. On the other hand, Malik Ambar's camp had become faction-ridden and Khan Khanan exploiting such a situation won over a number of Deccani and Maratha nobles. On Malik Ambar's request, Bijapur and Golkonda rulers sent contingents to help him. But Malik Ambar was badly defeated; the Mughals went up to Khirki and burnt it in 1616.

This Mughal victory was not only superfluous but shortlived also. The Mughals had not captured even an inch of the territory. Moreover, Malik Ambar reappeared and reoccupied Khirki. Jahangir recalled prince Parvez from the Deccan and appointed Khurram there in 1616. The Emperor himself moved from Ajmer to Mandu to be closer to the scene of action. Khurram sent envoys to Bijapur and Golkonda rulers who were very well received by them. Bijapur's relations with Nizam Shah were strained because the latter had attempted to capture Bijapur territory. Qutb Shah was too weak to oppose the Mughals. The Nizam Shahis were also exhausted and were unable to resist the enemy.

Adil Shah assured Khurram that he would return the imperial territory and would pay the tribute. He sent his envoy to Malik Ambar and induced him to accept the imperial terms. Malik Ambar surrendered Balaghat and the fort of Ahmednagar to the Mughals. Khurram was impressed by Adil Shah and on his recommendation Jahangir conferred the title of Farzand (son) on Adil Shah. After making administrative arrangements in the Deccan, Khurram went to Mandhu in 1617, the Emperor raised Khurram's rank from 20,000 *zat* and 10,000 *sawar* to 30,000 *zat* and 20,000 *sawar* and conferred the title of Shah Jahan on him. Jahangir admired Khurram's success considerably. But such an admiration of Khurram and rejoicings at the Mughal Court were meaningless. Khurram had not extended Mughal territory in the Deccan and had not brought about any permanent peace in the Deccan. He had simply retrieved Mughal position temporarily.

Malik Ambar, a better diplomat than Jahangir, obtained time to strengthen his position. The peace lasted only for three years. Malik Ambar, during this period, by his appeals to Adil Shah and Qutab Shah for help and by making matrimonial alliances with them, succeeded in forming a confederacy with them.

Jahangir and Shah Jahan went to Kashmir in 1619 and then got involved in the conquest of Kangra. This opportunity was utilized by Malik Ambar and he captured large portions of Khandesh, Berar, Ahmednagar and even besieged Mandu. Jahangir sent Shah Jahan again to the Deccan in 1620. Shah Jahan defeated Malik Ambar on various occasions and destroyed Khirki. Malik Ambar sued for peace which was granted. A treaty was signed according to which in addition to the imperial territory captured by the Deccanis after 1618, the Deccanis had to surrender 14 *kos* of the adjoining territory to the Mughals, Qutb Shah, Adil Shah and Nizam Shah were to pay war indemnity of rupees 20.18 and 12 *lakhs* respectively.

When the Mughal noble Mahabat Khan was sent to the Deccan to suppress the revolt of Shah Jahan, he allied with Adil Shah against Malik Ambar but the latter

defeated the allies at Bhatvadi in 1625. Then Malik Ambar made an attempt to capture Ahmednagar; but failing there, he wrested Sholapur from Adil Shah and in alliance with Shah Jahan tried to capture Burhanpur but failed. The submission of Shah Jahan to Jahangir soon after led Malik Ambar to stop hostilities. He died in 1626 and was succeeded by his son Fath Khan as **Wakil** and **peshwa** of the kingdom. But his arrogance made the cleavage between the **Dakhnis** and Habashis wide, resulting in the nobles joining the Mughal service in large numbers.

During the reign of Jahangir there was no addition to the Mughal territory in the Deccan. The Mughal court politics, the mutual dissensions of the Mughal nobles posted in the Deccan, their acceptance of bribe offered by the Deccani rulers weakened the Mughal authority in the Deccan states. In the case of the Deccan states, over ambition of Malik Ambar belied the hopes of a joint front of the Deccan states.

## 9.4 SHAH JAHAN AND THE DECCAN STATES

During the period between the death of Jahangir and the accession of Shah Jahan, the Mughal governor of the Deccan, Khan Jahan Lodi, with the intention of securing help in times of necessity, gave away Balaghat to the Nizam Shah. Shah Jahan, after ascending the throne, ordered Khan Jahan Lodi to recover it but as the latter failed, Shah Jahan recalled him to the court. Khan Jahan fled to the Deccan and took shelter with Nizam Shah. His rebellion and the shelter given to him by the aggressive policy of the Nizam Shahis and the loss of Balaghat, made Shah Jahan very angry with Nizam Shah and it resulted in the Shah Jahan's adoption of an aggressive policy towards the Deccan states. Meanwhile, Nizam Shahi **peshwa** Hamid Khan's wife advised Burhan III to release her brother Fath Khan.

The king released him but after some time the latter killed him, enthroned his son Husain in 1632, and then read the **khutba** and struck coins in Shah Jahan's name. Shah Jahan suppressed Khan Jahan Lodi's rebellion, recovered Balaghat and Berar, re-established Mughal supremacy over the Deccan and then returned to the North. The Bijapur noble Randaula Khan persuaded Fath Khan to oppose the Mughals which he carried out. It led Mahabat Khan to wrest Daulatabad fort from the Nizam Shah. Nizam Shah was imprisoned in the Gwalior fort and Fath Khan was assigned a **jagir**.

Shahji Bhosle, a Nizam Shahi noble, came forward to save the state. Conquering a number of forts, he enthroned a prince of the royal family with the title of Murtaza Nizam Shah III. His activities brought Shah Jahan to the Deccan in 1636 and a new phase of warfare started. Shahji was defeated and the Mughals occupied a number of forts. Then they devastated and occupied large tracts of land in Bijapur. Muhammad Adil Shah sued for peace. A settlement was made in 1636 according to which the Nizam Shahi state came to an end. It was divided between the Mughals and Bijapur; the territory lying in the north of the Bhima river went to the Mughals while the area lying in the south to Adil Shah.

Briefly speaking, the terms of the treaty were as follows:

- 1) Nizam Shahi State was divided between Bijapur and the Mughal empire. Bijapur was given the entire Konkan and the **pargana** of Dhakan, Parendia and Sholapur beyond the Sina, the district of Vengi between the Bhima and the Sina and the district of Bhalki on the Manjira river to the north-east of Kalyani.
- 2) Adil Shah had to give up his claims to Udgir and AUSA forts and was required to abstain from hindering any Mughal attempts to subdue Nizam Shah's officers still in charge of these forts.
- 3) No violation of the boundaries thus created should be made by either party.
- 4) Adil Shah was to pay to the Mughal Emperor rupees twenty **laks** in lump sum as tribute.
- 5) Adil Shah should live in peace and good relationship with Qutb Shah as the latter had agreed to pay an annual tribute of rupees 2 **laks** and had to become a vassal of the Mughal Emperor.

- 6) Both the parties would neither seduce officers and soldiers from the other nor would give refuge or service to them.
- 7) If Shivaji Bhonsle sought Adil Khan's service, he should be entertained only on condition that he handed over to the Mughal officers the forts of Junnar, Trimbak and Pemgarh which were in his possession.

Thus, Bijapur became a subordinate ally of the Mughal Empire, though it retained its independence. As the Bijapur ruler, due to the 1636 settlement, thought himself safe from the Mughals, he extended his territory in the South. But, according to the Dutch records, it was on Shah Jahan's instructions that Adit Shah and Qutb Shah conquered Karnataka.

The 1636 settlement altered the whole course of the Mughal—Bijapur relations. Till 1636, the Mughals were trying to conciliate Adil Shahi rulers because Bijapur was the strongest of the Deccan states. The Mughals always tried to alienate Bijapur from other Deccan kingdoms to prevent their coalition against the Mughals and thus to facilitate the conquest of the Deccan kingdoms one after the other. The extinction of Ahmednagar brought the Mughals to the borders of Bijapur and paved the way for the Mughal conquest of Bijapur.

For twenty years (1636-56), the Mughal—Bijapur relations remained peaceful and cordial except on two occasions when the Emperor was displeased with Adil Shah. In 1642-43, Adil Shah imprisoned his noble Mustafa Khan who was a sympathiser of the Mughal cause. On Shah Jahan's intervention, Adil Shah reinstated him. Adil Shah had adopted some audacious practices. Shah Jahan did not like this haughtiness and ordered him to discontinue them. Adil Shah complied with his order. He continued to send *peshkash* (tribute) also to the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan conferred the title of "Shah" on Muhammad Adil Shah in 1648.

Muhammed Adil Shah died in 1656 and after this there was a significant change in the Mughal attitude towards Bijapur. Prince Aurangzeb considered this to be a golden opportunity for invading Bijapur. He wrote to the Emperor that the successor of Muhammad Adil Shah, namely Ali Adil Shah II was not the real son of the deceased ruler but a boy of obscure parentage. Aurangzeb also won over a number of Bijapur nobles. It is said that financial constraints of the Mughal Empire also motivated Shah Jahan to change his policy towards the Deccan states. Shah Jahan ordered Aurangzeb to conquer the whole of Bijapur if possible; otherwise to annex that portion of the old Ahmednagar kingdom which had been ceded to Bijapur by the Treaty of 1636 and to spare the state on the payment of indemnity and acceptance of Mughal suzerainty. Thus, Shah Jahan broke the Treaty of 1636. The Emperor had no lawful right to confirm or question the succession at Bijapur. Bidar and Kalyani were captured by Aurangzeb. The road to Bijapur was clear. But suddenly Shah Jahan, on Dara Shukoh's advice, ordered Aurangzeb to end operations. The Bijapur ruler agreed to cede Bidar, Kalyani and also to pay one *Kror* (10 million) rupees as war indemnity, but realising the weakness of the Mughals at that time, Adil Shah did not pay the amount.

The relations of Golkonda with the Mughal Empire till the accession of Shah Jahan were confined mainly to diplomatic exchanges with the Mughal court; military and financial help to the Nizam Shahi and Adil Shahi states and to the Marathas against the Mughals. We have studied the 1636 Mughal settlement with Adil Shah. The same year a deed of submission and a covenant was signed by Abdullah Qutb Shah. Their main terms were the following:

- 1) The names of the twelve **Imams** would be replaced by those of the four Caliphs in Friday sermons, while the name of the Persian monarch would be replaced by that of the Mughal Emperor.
- 2) Coins would be struck in Mughal Emperor's name.
- 3) From the 9th regnal year of Shah Jahan, two **lakhs** of **hums** would be sent annually to the Emperor.
- 4) The Emperor's friends would be Abdullah's friends and the Emperor's enemies would be his enemies.

- 5) In case Adil Khan tried to invade Golkonda, Abdullah would seek the Emperor's help to expel him, but if the Mughal governor of the Deccan refused to forward his petition and he be forced to pay indemnity to Adil Khan, then the amount so paid would be deducted from his **peshkash** to the Mughals.

The settlement with the Mughals made Qutb Shaḥ a vassal of the Mughal Emperor. After this settlement, Abdullah Qutb Shah felt safe from the Mughals and conquered large areas of Karnataka. Abdullah ordered his noble Muhammad Said Mir Jumla to conquer Karnataka. Mir Jumla amassed great amount of wealth from these conquests. He traded in diamonds also which made him tremendously rich. Besides the royal army, he maintained his personal army also. He governed this territory from Gandikota just like an imperial ruler. All this made him as well as the members of his family very proud. His son Muhammad Amin even entered the palace in a drunken state and vomitted on the carpet. Abdullah ordered Mir Jumla to come to the Court but instead he carried on correspondance with Prince Aurangzeb. Abdullah imprisoned Amin in the Kovilkonda fort and confiscated his property. Very soon Shah Jahan granted the rank of 5000 **zat** to Mir Jumla and 2000 **zat** to his son.

In 1656, Shah Jahan picked up quarrel with Abdullah on the issue of (a) arrears of **peshkash** (tribute); (b) the difference in the exchange rate between the Golkonda **hun** and the Mughal rupees. At the time of the 1636 Settlement, one Golkonda **hun** was equivalent to four Mughal rupees. Now in 1656, it was equivalent to five rupees. Shah Jahan demanded the arrears to be paid according to the new exchange rate while Qutb Shah insisted on the old rate; and (c) Shah Jahan's winning over the defiant Mir Jumla to his side.

Relations between the Mughals and Abdullah became so strained that the Mughals besieged the Golkonda fort. But after sometime, on the advice of Prince Dara, the Emperor ordered Aurangzeb to raise the siege. A hasty treaty was signed between Aurangzeb and Abdullah according to which, besides other terms, Ramgir was ceded to the Mughals.

Though there is no definite answer to this question still it is maintained by some historians that financial crisis of the Empire, crisis in the **jagir** system and the desire to establish Mughal control over commercial potential of the Coromondal coast compelled Shah Jahan to dishonour the settlement of 1636 and to intervene in Golkonda and Bijapur in 1656-57. Whatever may be the reason, the fact is that the change in Mughal policy in 1656-57 did not bring any positive benefit to the Mughal Empire, rather it created suspicion among Deccan states against the Mughal empire. Far from solving the Deccan problem, Shah Jahan's policy ultimately complicated the Deccan situation.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Explain in 10 lines Jahangir's approach towards the Deccan states.

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- 2) List 5 important provisions of 1636 settlement between Shah Jahan and the Nizam Shahi state.

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## 9.5 AURANGZEB AND THE DECCAN STATES

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Aurangzeb, an advocate of direct conquest of the Deccan states, immediately after his accession faced a very complicated situation in the Deccan. The growing power of the Marathas and the suspicious attitude of the Deccan states towards the Mughals made Aurangzeb much more careful to adopt aggressive policy in the Deccan. Aurangzeb's initial concern was to compel Bijapur and Golkonda to abide by the treaty of 1657 and to surrender those territories which they agreed to cede to the Mughals in 1657. But Jai Singh, the Mughal noble, wanted to pursue the forward policy in the Deccan and to get support of the Marathas. In this mission he made the Treaty of Purandar (1664) with Shivaji. Then Jai Singh made two abortive attempts to conquer Bijapur. The death of Ali Adil Shah, the accession of Sikander Adil Shah, a minor, in 1672 and the court intrigues in Bijapur provided a favourable ground for Aurangzeb's intervention in Bijapur. Aurangzeb appointed a very energetic general Bahadur Khan as the governor of the Deccan. Bahadur started by winning over the Bijapur nobles. Khawas Khan was one of such nobles who suggested a Mughal-Bijapur alliance against Shivaji. But before it could materialise, he was overthrown. Having failed in this attempt, the Mughals opened hostilities in 1676 by championing the cause of Bijapur's Dakhni party against Bahlol Khan—the leader of the Afghan nobles in Bijapur. But after Bahlol Khan had repeatedly defeated Bahadur Khan, the latter made a demonstration of high military preparedness which unnerved Bahlol Khan. Bahlol Khan allied with Bahadur Khan and connived at the Mughal conquest of Naldurg and Gulbarga in 1677. After that, he joined hands with the Mughal commander Diler Khan and they wrote to Aurangzeb against Bahadur Khan accusing him of hindering Mughal interests in the Deccan. Aurangzeb recalled Bahadur Khan and appointed Diler Khan to officiate as the subedar of the Deccan.

At Gulbarga, the Regent of Bijapur Siddi Masud made a pact with the Mughals with the provisions that (1) Siddi Masud was to be the wazir of Bijapur but he must obey the orders of Aurangzeb. (2) He should not make any alliance with Shivaji and should help the Mughals against him. (3) Adil Shah's sister was to be married to one of Aurangzeb's sons. But on his return to Bijapur, Siddi Masud did not fulfil any of the terms of the pact. He tried to ally with Shivaji. Diler Khan made unsuccessful attempts to persuade Siddi Masud to fulfil the terms of the pact. Aurangzeb ordered an attack on Bijapur because Bahlol Khan had died, the Afghan soldiers had dispersed and the faction—fighting at Bijapur court had intensified. Diler Khan bribed troopers to serve under the Mughals. But Masud played dual diplomacy by allying with Shivaji against the Mughals and allying with Diler Khan against Shivaji. A Mughal contingent was invited to Bijapur, royally welcomed and then sent with the Bijapuri auxiliaries against the Marathas. Meanwhile, Diler Khan destroyed and occupied a number of Shivaji's possessions. Siddi Masud's position became very weak because a large number of his troopers joined Diler Khan's camp. Therefore, in 1679, Adil Shah's sister was sent to the Mughal Court to be married to Prince Azam in 1679. The enmity between the Mughal governor of the Deccan, Shah Alam and Diler Khan led the former to make peace with Bijapur in the beginning of 1680. In Bijapur the *khutba* was read and coins struck in Aurangzeb's name.

This was the greatest achievement of Shah Alam as the Viceroy of the Deccan. He succeeded in establishing Mughal suzerainty over Bijapur by peaceful diplomacy



which Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb had failed to achieve even through military strategy. Adil Shah accepted Mughal suzerainty because he was weak, his administration was slack due to factionalism at his court and his nobles had deserted to the Mughal camp.

This good relationship between the Mughals and Bijapur got ruptured because the Mughals sought help from Bijapur against Sambhaji, but instead of helping the Mughals, Bijapur secretly assisted the Marathas. During 1682-83, the Mughals ravaged Bijapur territory and tried to capture Bijapur itself but failed. In 1684, Aurangzeb put the following demands before Adil Shah: (i) to supply provisions to the Mughal Army; (ii) to keep open the roads for the Mughal army to march against Sambhaji; (iii) to send five or six thousand cavalry to help the Mughals against the Marathas; (iv) not to conspire with Sambhaji and (v) to expel the noble Sharza Khan from Bijapur. But Adil Shah, instead of complying with the demands, made the following counter demands; (i) to remit the amount taken by Diler Khan; (ii) to restore the jagir of Sharza Khan occupied by the Mughals and (iii) to restore Bijapur territory so far occupied by the Mughals. He refused to expel Sharza Khan with the plea that if he did so, the latter would join the Marathas.

Such a situation further widened the gap between the Mughals and Bijapur. On the Emperor's orders, the Mughals opened the campaign in 1685 and Sikandar Adil Shah surrendered to them in 1686. He was made a captive and the Bijapur state became a part of the Mughal Empire.

Aurangzeb was not happy over the developments in Golkonda, particularly with the role of Madanna and Akanna who were believed to have joined hands with the Marathas against the Mughals. He learnt that Abdullah Qutb Shah had been financially helping Shivaji's son Sambhaji. Abdullah's promise of large military help to Sikandar Adil Shah during the Mughal invasion of 1685 also came to the Emperor's knowledge. He ordered Prince Muazzam to invade the Qutb Shahi territory. In the second battle of Malkher in 1686, Qutb Shahi forces were routed. It led to the defection of the Qutb Shahi nobles to the Mughals which forced Abdullah to leave Hyderabad, and shut himself in Golkonda fort. The Emperor reached very close to Golkonda fort in 1687 and besieged it. After eight months siege, Abdullah surrendered to the Mughals. He was imprisoned in Daulatabad fort and Golkonda became a part of the Mughal empire.

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## 9.6 AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MUGHAL POLICY IN THE DECCAN

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The above survey makes one thing clear that personal whims or religious considerations of the Mughals did not dictate their policy towards the Deccan states. We have seen in the preceding sections that starting from Akbar, there were changes in relations between the Mughals and the Deccan states. It is better to look at these changes keeping in view the overall socio-economic and administrative situation of the Mughal empire. Akbar's basic concern in the Deccan was to establish Mughal authority there and to protect the 'Surat hinterland'. He was aware that it was not possible to achieve this objective through military conquest only, so he took recourse to diplomatic manoeuvres also. Jahangir was in favour of maintaining the position that Akbar achieved by the treaty of 1600 in the Deccan and Jahangir's reading of the situation in the Deccan and the internal problems of the Empire influenced him to adopt this policy. Violation of the Treaty of 1600 by Ahmednagar compelled Shah Jahan to take an aggressive posture against Ahmednagar and the Treaty of 1636 settled the Deccan problem at least for the next 20 years. Again, the growing expansion of Bijapur and Golkonda in the Karnatak region and the financial crisis of the Empire persuaded Shah Jahan to change his policy. Even Aurangzeb who, before his accession, was a staunch advocate of forward policy in the Deccan was not in favour of outright conquest of Bijapur and Golkonda. The rising power of the Marathas, threat of an alliance between the Marathas and Bijapur-Golkonda as well as the internal crisis of the Empire compelled Aurangzeb to conquer Bijapur and Golkonda in the 1680s. All these point to the fact that the Deccan policy of the Mughals was determined by the needs of the contemporary situation rather than by mere personal desire of the rulers.

There is a trend among some historians to criticize the Mughal policy in the Deccan as wrongly devised and the Mughal empire ultimately had to pay for it. Passing such judgment would be historically incorrect. In view of the prevailing situation in the Deccan, specifically the rise of the Marathas on the one hand and the existing enmity and distrust among the Deccan states on the other, made the Mughal intervention in the Deccan inevitable. If we look closely at different phases of the Mughal policy in Deccan, it seems clear that the Mughal rulers certainly considered the contemporary situation before taking any step towards the Deccan states. As we have seen, different factors guided their attitude towards the Deccan states. Their occasional failure in the Deccan was not only because of their lack of understanding the Deccan problem but the factional fightings of the Mughal nobles as well as their questionable loyalty was equally responsible for the debacle in the Deccan affairs. So one should look at the Deccan policy of the Mughals from a broader perspective, instead of narrowing down on any single factor.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Why did Aurangzeb ultimately occupy Bijapur and Golkonda?

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- 2) What were the major considerations of the Mughals in determining their policy towards the Deccan states?

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## 9.7 LET US SUM UP

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We hope after studying this Unit you have learnt that the Deccan policy of the Mughals was shaped by many complex factors. Akbar was the first Mughal ruler who wanted to extend the Mughal suzerainty over the Deccan states. Akbar remained satisfied with the conquest of Khandesh, Berar and parts of Ahmednagar. During Jahangir's reign, there was no addition to the Mughal territory in the Deccan. Shah Jahan in alliance with Bijapur partitioned Ahmednagar in 1636 and till 1656-57 did not pursue any forward policy in the Deccan. Initially Aurangzeb did not want to annex Bijapur and Golkonda, but ultimately both the states were annexed to the Mughal empire. This annexation did not bring the Deccan problem to an end, rather by the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century the

crisis against cropped up in the Deccan and the major threat to the empire came from the Marathas. We would discuss the Marathas in Unit 10 to help you better in understanding the overall situation in the Deccan.

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## 9.8 KEY WORDS

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- Huns** : a Deccani gold coin also known as **pagoda**. New **pagoda** 3-1/2 Mughal rupee; old **pagoda** 4-5 Mughal rupee
- Jagir** : revenue assignment (for details see Unit 15)
- Kos** : equal to 2 miles, 4 furlongs and 158 yards
- Khutba** : a sermon recited in mosques on Fridays wherein the name of the ruler was included.
- Peshwa** : Prime Minister
- Sawar** : a Mughal rank that determine the number of contingent (horses and horsemen) a Mughal **marsabdar**/noble was asked to keep
- zat** : a Mughal rank that determine the position of a Mughal **mansabdar** (bureaucrat) in the hierarchy as well as his personal pay.

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## 9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) i)✓ (ii)✓ (iii) X (ix) X
- 2) Read the first paragraph of Sec. 9.2 you would get your answer.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Jahangir also believed in territorial expansion. But because of some problems he was not able to achieve much in the Deccan (see Sec. 9.3).
- 2) See Sec. 9.4

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Bijapur ruler's assistance to the Marathas, failure of the Bijapur ruler to comply with the Mughal demands, developments in Golkonda, etc. all these should be included in your answer (see Sec. 9.5).
- 2) Write this answer giving your own argument (see Sec. 9.6).

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# UNIT 10 RISE OF THE MARATHAS IN THE 17TH CENTURY

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## Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Sources and Geography
- 10.3 Rise of the Maratha Power: Theoretical Framework
- 10.4 Rise of the Maratha Power: Polity
  - 10.4.1 Shahji
  - 10.4.2 Shivaji: Early Life
- 10.5 Mughal-Maratha Relations : An Analysis
  - 10.5.1 First Phase; 1615-1664
  - 10.5.2 Second Phase; 1664-1667
  - 10.5.3 Third Phase; 1667-1680
  - 10.5.4 Fourth Phase; 1680-1707
- 10.6 The Marathas and the Siddis of Janjira
- 10.7 The Marathas, the English and the Portuguese
- 10.8 Administrative Structure of the Marathas
  - 10.8.1 Central Administration
  - 10.8.2 Provincial Administration
  - 10.8.3 Military Organisation
  - 10.8.4 Navy
  - 10.8.5 Judiciary
- 10.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.10 Key Words
- 10.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 10.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will know about the:

- factors responsible for the rise of the Marathas,
- political framework of the rise of the Maratha power,
- Mughal-Maratha conflict,
- Maratha's relations with European powers,
- Shivaji's administrative structure, and how far it was influenced by the Deccani set up, and
- deterioration that gradually crept in under the Peshwas.

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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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With the rise of the Maratha power a new dimension was added in the Deccan politics. This not only changed the complexion of the Deccani states but also influenced the Mughal-Deccani relations. In the present Unit we will discuss the factors that ultimately contributed to the rise of the Maratha power. You will read how the Marathas were able to rise to the prominence of a 'kingly' state from the

major element in the Unit. It mentions how the Marathas kept challenging the Mughals till the turn of the century and the latter could never succeed in crushing them completely. The characteristic features of Maratha administration are also discussed. The Unit also takes into account Maratha relations with the new emerging European powers in the Arabian sea.

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## 10.2 SOURCES AND GEOGRAPHY

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Before proceeding to the rise of Maratha power, let us first familiarise you with the sources of Maratha history as well as the geographical layout of the areas they ruled over.

### Sources

The most important Marathi work is Shivaji's biography (**bakhar**) written by Sabhasad in 1694. This was further elaborated by Chitrugupta. Sambhaji's **Adnapatra** or **Marathshahitil Rajniti** of Ramchandra Panta Amatya (1716) is another Marathi work of importance which traces the events from Shivaji to Sambhaji. Jayarama Pindye's **Radhamadhav Vilas Champu** (in Sanskrit) is another work that primarily deals with the life of Shivaji. Bhimsen's **Nuskha-i Dilkusha** (Persian) also throws important light on Mughal-Maratha relations.

### Geography

Maharashtra includes the **Konkan** between the Sahyadri ranges (also known as the Western Ghats) and the western sea-coast; **Ghatmatha**, at the top of the Sahyadri ranges; and the **Des**, the lower valley. On its north towards the west runs the Sahyadri mountain ranges while from east to west lies the Satpura and Vindhya hill terrain. Its hill-forts provided natural defences. Strategically, it was one of the best fortified regions in India. Its hilly terrain and impregnable forts practically remained impregnable to the invaders. But the soil in the hilly tract is generally of poor quality unfit for cultivation. However, these natural surroundings made the inhabitants tough and hardworking. In the Deccan plateau the soil is black and fertile, though the rainfall here is scanty and the region produces good crops.

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## 10.3 RISE OF THE MARATHA POWER: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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Various views and opinions have been expressed by scholars regarding the rise of the Maratha power. Grant Duff describes it as the result of 'conflagration' in the forests of Sahyadri. But according to M.G. Ranade, it was much more than the mere fortuitous circumstances. He calls it a national struggle of independence against foreign domination. This opinion is disputed on the ground that if the Mughals were foreigners then Bijapur and Ahmednagar rulers were also equally alien. If the Marathas could accept the domination of one power then why not of the Mughals?

Jadunath Sarkar and G.S. Sardesai emphasised the emergence of Maratha power as a 'Hindu' reaction against the communal policies of Aurangzeb. Yet, one finds Shivaji applauding Akbar's ideas of **sulh kul**. In fact, this argument also does not seem to have any sound base. Their earliest patrons were Muslims, i.e., the rulers of Bijapur and Ahmednagar. Besides, one does not find Shivaji fighting for the cause of Hindus and their welfare outside Maharashtra. Even within Maharashtra one does not find him undertaking social reforms. It is said that his assumption of the title **haindava dharmoddharak** at the time of his coronation was not much new in that period.

Andre Wink has seen their rise in the growing Mughal pressure on the Deccan Sultans. Even Grant Duff acknowledges the Mughal factor in their rise. But it was perhaps more than that.

Satish Chandra finds socio-economic content in the rise of the Marathas. Shivaji's success lay in his ability to mobilize the peasants in his area. It is generally argued that he discontinued **jagirdari** and **zamindari** and established direct contact with the peasants thus freeing them from exploitation. But according to Satish Chandra, he did not do away with the system at all. Instead, he curtailed the powers of big **deshmukhs**, reformed the abuses and established necessary supervisory authority. Hence, he made the old system work better (for details see Block 5, Unit 19). Besides, their power was also restricted by curtailing their armed retainers. This is the main reason that Shivaji's military strength did not consist of 'feudal levies' of the bigger **deshmukhs**. Petty landholders, who were often at the mercy of bigger **deshmukhs**, benefitted by this policy. In fact, it was in these petty landlords that his strength lay. For example, the **deshmukhs** of Mavle, who were the first to rally to Shivaji's side, were petty landholders. Similar was the case with Morays of Javli, Khopdes of **Utrol** and Nimbalkars of Phaltan. Besides, his emphasis on extension and improvement of cultivation benefitted not only the peasants in general but also these petty landholders in particular.

There was struggle for control over land among bigger, middle and smaller **deshmukhs**, **mirasis** (resident owner cultivator) and the **uparis** (outsiders). To expand one's **watan** was an "all absorbing passion." Political authority at that time also depended on the control over land.

Irfan Habib points out the connection between the rise of the Maratha power and the rebellious mood of the oppressed peasantry.

There also lies the social content of the Maharashtra movement. Shivaji tried to raise the status of his family by entering into matrimonial alliances with the leading **deshmukh** families—Shirkes, Morays, Nimbalkars. Thus he followed a dual policy, i.e., curtailing the political power of the bigger **deshmukhs** on the one hand, and entering into matrimonial alliances with them for claiming equal status on the other hand. His coronation (1674) not only put him higher in status among other Maratha clans, but also put him at par with other Deccani rulers. His assumption of superior status of **suryavamsi kshatriya** with the help of the leading **brahmins** of Benaras, Gagabhat, was a definite move in this direction. Shivaji not only got prepared **suryavamsi kshatriya** genealogy of his family linking it with Indra, but also claimed the high sounding title of **kshatriya kulavatamsa** (the ornament of **kshatriya** families). Thus, by confirming higher status among the Maratha families he claimed exclusive right to collect **sardeshmukhi** which was earlier enjoyed by other Maratha families under the patronage of Shirkes, Ghorpades, etc.

This clearly emphasises the social tensions prevalent in the Maratha society. They were mainly agriculturists and also formed a fighting class. Yet, they were not **kshatriyas** in status. Thus the social movement launched by Shivaji served a powerful means to weld together the Marathas and the **kunbis** (cultivating class). **Kunbi** peasants, **kolis** and other tribals of Maval area who rallied round Shivaji in large numbers were also motivated by the desire to raise their status in the social hierarchy. Thus, the Maratha rise was not just a result of a desire to overthrow the yoke of foreign rule: it had deep-rooted socio-economic reasons.

The intellectual and ideological framework for their rise was provided by the **bhakti** movement which got "crystallised into "Maharashtra **dharm**a". This helped in providing the Marathas a cultural identity as well. Emphasis of the **bhakti** saints on egalitarianism provided ideal background vis-a-vis justification for the mobility in the **varna** scale by individuals and groups.

Rise of Marathas of such humble origins as the Sindhias exemplifies the success of the movement. During this time, a sizeable number of groups improved their status in the **varna** hierarchy and legitimised their right to political power. M.G. Ranade (later supported by V.K. Rajwade) has formulated the idea that it was 'Maharashtra **dharm**a' that resulted in the political independence of the Marathas. He described it as **jayshnu** (aggressive) Hinduism as against the **sahishnu** (tolerant) Hinduism. The earliest trace of the term Maharashtra **dharm**a occurs in a 15th century work **Gurucharita**, but in the context of "an ethical policy of a great enlightened state". To give it a political overtone, credit goes to a 17th century saint-poet Ramdas who expressed unfavourable opinion about the Turko-Afghan-Mughal rule. Shivaji used it

to his advantage. He used this popular ideological chant of Maharashtra **dharma** against the Deccanis and the Mughals. Marathas' religious feelings were centred around the goddess Tulaja Bhavani, Vithoba and Mahadeva. The battle-cry of the Marathas "**Har Har Mahadeva**" touched the sentiments of Maratha peasantry. But, as rightly pointed out by P.V. Ranade, "Hindu hostility to Muslim hegemony was not the primary motivating factor nor the dynamic element of medieval Indian political scene". The hollowness of the ideology is well evident when Shivaji and other Maratha **sardars** collected **chauth** and **sardeshmukhi** (a legalised plunder) across their boundaries. In fact, it was a "psychological tonic" to mobilize the peasantry in its early phase of Maratha expansion.

It is also difficult to accept that Shivaji wanted to carve out a 'Hindu Swarajya'. Rather it should be seen more as a regional reaction against the centralising tendencies of the Mughal Empire. The Marathas wanted to form a large principality for themselves, for which an ideal background was provided by the disintegration of the Nizam Shahi power of Ahmednagar and the introduction of a new factor—the Mughals. Its inherent socio-economic contradiction also helped in mobilizing the local landed elements in general.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Recall any two Marathi sources for constructing the history of the Marathas.

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2) Tick mark the correct/wrong (✓ / x) statements :

- 1) Sahyadri ranges and the western ghats are two different geographical units.
- 2) Soil on the hilly tracts was fit for cultivation.
- 3) Soil of the Deccan plateau is black and fertile.
- 4) Climate of the Deccan made its inhabitants tough and hard working.

3) Can the emergence of the Maratha movement be termed as 'Hindu reaction'.

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**10.4 RISE OF THE MARATHA POWER: POLITY**

In the present section, we will confine our study to the emergence of Maratha chieftains under the Deccani states in general, and, the process of the rise of the Bhonsle family in particular.

The Marathas in the Deccan began emerging since the early 17th century under the Bijapur, Ahmednagar and Golkonda states. They served in the army of Bijapur and Ahmednagar rulers, but some served the Golkonda state as well. The hill-forts in the Deccani states were controlled by the Marathas though the forts of more importance were manned by Muslim **qiladars**. They were often honoured by the titles of **raja**, **naik** and **rao**. The Bijapur ruler Ibrahim Adil Shah employed the natives of Maharashtra as **bargirs** and frequently used them against the Nizam Shahi rulers of Ahmednagar. He even recruited Brahmin and the Marathas in the accounts department. The Maratha **sardars** who served the Bijapur rulers were Chunder Rao Moray, the naik of Karnataka who excelled under Yusuf Adil Shah of Bijapur; his

son Yashwant Rao distinguished himself against Nizam Shahi rulers of Ahmednagar and was confirmed as the Raja of Javli; and Rao Naik Nimbalkar or Phultun Rao who joined the Bijapur rulers in the mid-17th century. Jujhar Rao Ghatage, the **deshmukh** of Mullori, joined the Bijapur ruler Ibrahim Adil Shah. Similarly, the Manays were distinguished **silahdars** under Bijapur. The Ghorpades, Duflays of Jhutt and Sawants of Waree also served Bijapur in the first half of the 17th century. Under the Nizam Shahi rulers, Jadav Rao, the **deshmukh** of Sindkher, was most powerful. Lohjee Jadav Rao possessed 10,000 horses under the Nizam Shahi rulers.

### 10.4.1 Shahji

Some members of house of Bhonsle, to which Shivaji belonged, were **patels** under the Ahmednagar rulers. Shivaji's grandfather Maloji was connected with Jagpal Rao Naik Nimbalkar, the **deshmukh** of Phultun, by matrimonial alliance (his sister Deepa Bai was married to Maloji). In 1577, Maloji joined the service of Murtaza Nizam Shah as **bargir** at the instigation of Lohjee Jadav Rao of Sindkher. But in 1599 misunderstanding between the two over the question of marriage between Shahji and Jija Bai forced Maloji to leave. But soon (beginning of the 17th century), Maloji asserted his position and again joined the Nizam Shahis with the help of the Nimbalkars and got the title of Maloji Raja Bhonsle. He was given the charge of the forts of Shivneri and Chakun and got the **jagirs** of Poona and Sopa in return. His prestige enhanced when in 1604 he got connected with Jadav Rao Sindkher. The latter married his daughter Jija Bai to his son Shahji. Meanwhile, Mughal encroachments in Ahmednagar (under Akbar, see Unit 9) completely shattered its stability. Internal strifes also started. This led to total chaos and confusion. Jahangir took advantage of the situation and in 1621 succeeded in winning over the favour of many Maratha **sardars** to his side. The most important one was Lohjee Jadav Rao, the **deshmukh** of Sindkher, and the father-in-law of Shahji. After the accession of Murtaza Nizam Shah II (1629), Lohjee Jadav Rao shifted his allegiance to the Nizam Shahi ruler, but was treacherously murdered (1630). At this time, Jagdeo Rao also joined Mughal forces with a **mansab** of 5000 **zat**.

Shahji Bhonsle, though earlier a supporter of Khan Jahan Lodi before his rebellion, offered his services to the Mughals through Azam Khan and received the rank of 6000 **zat** and 5000 **sawar** in 1630. Shahji's cousin Kheloji, the son of Maloji's younger brother Vetoji, also joined the Mughal service. But, in 1632, Shahji defected to Bijapur and joined the service of Adil Shah. By 1634, Shahji succeeded in controlling almost 1/4th of the Nizam Shahi dominion. But the Mughal onslaught in 1636 forced Shahji to surrender all his gains and he was shifted towards Konkan as a Bijapur noble. It was at this time that Shahji got an opportunity to impress Morar Punt (Morari Pandit). He joined Randaulah Khan in his Karnatak campaign and rendered excellent performance for which Muhammad Adil Shah granted him 24 villages as **jagir** in Kurar (Satara district).

(To avoid repetition and for the purpose of putting the things in sequence we are leaving out our narration on Shahji's life here and switching over to Shivaji and his early life. The left over portion on Shahji will be dealt along with the rise of Shivaji's power.)

### 10.4.2 Shivaji : Early Life

Born at Shivneri (10 April, 1627), Shivaji was the youngest son of Shahji and Jija Bai. In his early childhood there was hardly any interaction between Shahji and Shivaji for the former was busy most of the time in his Karnatak campaign as Bijapur noble (1630-36). In 1636, with Shahji's surrender of Shivner, one of the seven forts surrendered by Shahji, Shivaji along with his mother had to shift to Poona under the guardianship of Dadaji Konddev. In 1640-41, Shivaji got married to Sai Bai Nimbalkar and Shahji entrusted the charge of his Poona **jagir** to him but under Dadaji Konddev's guardianship. After Dadaji Konddev's death (1647), Shivaji became the sole incharge of his Poona **jagir** as Shahji's agent. Shivaji at first befriended the Maval chiefs on the west of Poona district and it were they who formed the backbone of Shivaji's army in the years to come. The Mavle chieftains Jedhe **nayak** of Kari and Bandal **nayak** were the first to join Shivaji.



Shivaji wanted to occupy all the possessions of Shahji, (which the latter held in 1634 but had to surrender in 1636) as a matter of legitimate right. After Dadaji Konddev's death, Shivaji with definite plans, decided to recover them. However he had to restrict himself (as early as 1648) owing to Shahji's arrest by Mustafa Khan, the Bijapuri commander. Shivaji unsuccessfully tried to pressurise Adil Shahi ruler for the release of his father through an alliance with the Mughals (1649). Shahji was ultimately released (16 May, 1649) after surrendering Bangalore and Kondana to Bijapur.

In the meantime (1648), Shivaji occupied the fort of Purander This provided an impregnable defence to the Marathas in the years to come. The next in line to fall was the fort of Javli (1656). It was the stronghold of the famous Mavle chieftain Chandra Rao More. With its occupation, he got another stronghold Rairi (later renamed Raigarh) which was to assume the status of the Maratha capital shortly after. The conquest of Javli not only opened the gate for further expansion towards south and west Konkan but it also increased Shivaji's military strength with Mavle chieftains of More territory joining him.

(After this summary assessment of Shivaji's rise, we are switching over to the Mughal-Maratha conflict. We will deal with the expansion of Maratha power under Shivaji and Sambhaji along with Mughal-Maratha relations.)

## 10.5 MUGHAL-MARATHA RELATIONS: AN ANALYSIS

The Mughal-Maratha relations can be divided into four phases: (i) 1615-1664; (ii) 1664-1667; (iii) 1667-1680 and (iv) 1680-1707.

### 10.5.1 First Phase : 1615-1664

The Mughals, as early as Jahangir's reign, realised the importance of Maratha chieftains in the Deccan politics. Jahangir succeeded in persuading some of the Maratha chieftains to defect his side in 1615. As a result, the Mughals succeeded in defeating the combined Deccani armies (1616). Shah Jahan, too as early as 1629, attempted to win over the Maratha sardars. Shahji, the father of Shivaji, joined the Mughals this time but later defected and conspired against the Mughals with Murari Pandit and the other anti-Mughal faction of the Bijapur court. Shah Jahan, realising the emerging threat of the Marathas, opted for a Mughal-Bijapur alliance against the Marathas. He asked the Bijapur ruler to employ Shahji, but to keep him at a distance from the Mughal territory in Karnataka (Treaty of 1636). Even Aurangzeb seems to have adopted his father's policy when just before leaving for the North on the eve of the war of succession he in his *nishan* to Adil Shah advised him to do the same. But Aurangzeb's desire for Bijapur-Mughal alliance against Shivaji turned out to be a nightmare for, unlike in 1636 when Shah Jahan offered 2/3 of the Nizam Shahi territory in bargain, Aurangzeb had nothing to offer. According to Satish Chandra, this contradiction dragged throughout till Aurangzeb occupied Bijapur in 1687.

Aurangzeb's attempts to align with Shivaji as early as 1657 failed because Shivaji demanded Dabhol and the Adil Shahi Konkan, a region fertile and rich as well as important for foreign trade. Soon Shivaji switched over to Bijapur and raided the Mughal Deccan (Ahmednagar and Junnar sub-divisions). Aurangzeb's exit and the war of succession left the stage free for Shivaji to act at will. Soon he occupied Kalyan and Bhivandi (Oct. 1657) and Mahuli (Jan. 1658). Thus the entire eastern half of the Kolaba district was captured by Shivaji from the Abyssinians (Siddis) of Janjira.

With Aurangzeb's departure, Bijapur turned towards Marathas. Adil Shahi ruler entrusted this task to Abdullah Bhatari Afzal Khan. But Afzal Khan's forces were no match to Shivaji's. In such a situation only diplomacy and tact could have worked. A meeting was arranged for a compromise but Shivaji got him murdered (10 Nov. 1659). After Afzal Khan's murder it took hardly any time for the Marathas to overpower the Bijapuri army. Soon Panhala and south Konkan fell to the Marathas. But the Marathas could not hold Panhala for long and it again fell to Bijapur (2 March, 1660).

It was this situation that forced Aurangzeb to replace Prince Muazzam by Shaista Khan (July, 1659) in the Deccan as viceroy. Shaista Khan succeeded in occupying Chakan (15 August, 1660) and north Konkan (1661). He also kept the Marathas on their heels throughout 1662-63 but failed to wrest south Konkan (Ratnagiri) from them. The final blow to Mughal prestige came on 5th April 1663 at Poona, when Shivaji attacked Shaista Khan in the night in the very heart of the Mughal camp, surprised everyone and seriously wounded the Mughal viceroy. This was followed by the first sack of Surat (6-10 January, 1664) by the Marathas.

### 10.5.2 Second Phase : 1664-1667

The rising menace of Shivaji, murder of Afzal Khan, occupation of Panhala and south Konkan, reluctance of Bijapur army to tackle Shivaji; and finally the failure of Shaista Khan (1600-1664) forced the Mughals to reassess the whole situation. Now Aurangzeb appointed Mirza Raja Jai Singh as the viceroy of Deccan. Jai Singh conceived a masterplan for the outright conquest of Deccan, first against the Mughal policy of cautious advance. According to this masterplan, all of all Bijapur was to be threatened by allying with Shivaji after giving him concessions at the cost of Bijapur and shifting Shivaji's jagir to less sensitive areas, away from the Mughal Deccan. After the defeat of Bijapur, as Jai Singh felt, the task of suppression of Shivaji would not have been a difficult one.

Initially Jai Singh exerted constant pressure on Shivaji since the inception of his charge in the Deccan. He succeeded in defeating Shivaji at Purandar (1665). Jai Singh now proposed for Mughal-Maratha alliance. By the resultant treaty of Purandar (1665), Shivaji surrendered 23 out of 35 forts, worth annual income of 4 lakhs of huns, in the Nizam Shahi territory and 12 other forts including Rajgarh, each yielding 1 lakh huns annually. The loss was to be compensated in Bijapuri Talkonkan and Balaghat. Besides, Shivaji's son was enrolled as a mansabdar of 5000 zat in the Mughal army. This perfectly fitted into Jai Singh's scheme to keep away Shivaji from sensitive Mughal frontier. At the same time seeds of confrontation between Shivaji and Bijapur rulers were also sown (for Shivaji had to directly confront Bijapur for Talkonkan and Balaghat).

Aurangzeb, however, was a little hesitant to such a proposal. For him, both Bijapur and the Marathas were separate problems and each had to be tackled separately. Aurangzeb, therefore, accepted in principle the attack on Bijapur but without further military reinforcements. Besides, he conferred on Shivaji only the Bijapur Balaghat and that, too, depended on the success of the projected Bijapur campaigns. So, in a situation of Bijapur-Golkonda alliance with no fresh reinforcement from Aurangzeb, and the presence of anti-Shivaji faction under Diler Khan within the Mughal camp at Deccan, Jai Singh could hardly aspire for success.

At this moment, following the Bijapur-Golkonda alliance (1666) Jai Singh, in a bid to win over the Marathas, proposed for Shivaji's visit to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb at Agra. But at the Mughal court, the so called insult to Shivaji (for treating him at par with the nobles of 5000 zat and his welcome by a lower rank official) followed by the enraged behaviour of Shivaji at the Mughal court, resulted in Shivaji's imprisonment at Agra.

Aurangzeb's unwillingness and later Shivaji's imprisonment at Agra gave a big jolt to Jai Singh's plan. At this juncture Jai Singh asked for the Emperor's presence in the Deccan as the only way to end up factions among the Mughal nobles there. But Aurangzeb's involvement in the north-west and with Persia and the Yusufzais hardly provided him time to react. Finally, Shivaji's escape from Agra (1666) sealed all hopes of success of Jai Singh's plan. Jai Singh was asked to proceed to Kabul, being replaced by Prince Muazzam (May, 1667) as the Mughal viceroy of the Deccan.

The failure of Jai Singh's plan was unfortunate, for Mughals could neither succeed in destroying Shivaji with the help of Bijapur (1672-76) nor conquer Deccani states with Maratha help (1676-79).

### 10.5.3 Third Phase : 1667-1680

After his escape from Agra, Shivaji did not desire to confront the Mughals immediately. Instead, he sought friendly relations (April and November 1667). Prince Muazzam pleasingly conferred a mansab of 5000 zat upon Shivaji's son Sambhaji and

a jagir in Berar (August, 1668). Aurangzeb got alarmed over his son's friendship with Shivaji and feared a rebellion. Aurangzeb asked Prince Muazzam to arrest Pratap Rao and Niraji Pant, the Maratha agents at Aurangabad. In the meantime, the Mughals attacked a part of Shivaji's jagir at Berar to recover one lakh of rupees advanced to Shivaji for his Agra visit. These developments alarmed Shivaji and he asked his agents Niraji Pant and Pratap Rao to leave Aurangabad. Shivaji attacked many forts ceded to the Mughals by the treaty of Purandar (1665). He occupied Kandana, Purandar, Mahuli and Nander (all in 1670). In the meantime, clashes developed between Prince Muazzam and Diler Khan. Diler Khan accused the Prince of alleged alliance with Shivaji, while the Prince blamed Diler Khan for disobedience. This internal strife weakened the Mughal army. Aurangzeb withdrew Jaswant Singh, the right hand man of Prince Muazzam and posted him at Burhanpur. Taking advantage of the situation, Shivaji sacked Surat for the second time (30 October, 1670). This was followed by Maratha successes in Berar and Baglana (1670-71). The forts of Ahivant, Markanda, Ravla and Javla in Baglana and Karinja, Ausa, Nandurbar, Salhir, Mulhir, Chauragarh and Hulgarh fell to the Marathas.

Maratha successes raised alarm in the Mughal court. Mahabat Khan was sent to the Deccan as the sole incharge of the affairs (November, 1670). But he, too, could not gain much success; consequently he was removed from the scene along with Prince Muazzam in 1672. The Deccan was now placed under Bahadur Khan (1673).

Marathas continued their victorious march. They occupied Koil (June 1672). But their raids in Khandesh and Berar (December, 1672) were frustrated by the Mughals. In 1673, Bahadur Khan succeeded in occupying Shivner. Yet these Mughal successes could hardly hold Shivaji. He took full advantage of the chaos that prevailed in Bijapur following Ali Adil Shah's death (24 November, 1672). His son was too young (just four years) to provide stability. Shivaji wrested the forts of Panhala (6 March 1673), Parli (1 April 1673) and Satara (27 July 1673) from Bijapur. There were factions in the Bijapur court. The anti-Khawas Khan faction under Bahlol Khan put the entire blame of Bijapur reverses on Khawas Khan. In 1674, Bahlol Khan succeeded in pushing back the Marathas at Kanara.

Meanwhile, Afghan disturbances in the north-west forced Aurangzeb to withdraw from Deccan and Bahadur Khan was left alone with a weakened contingent. Shivaji took full advantage of the situation. He crowned himself as king on 6 June, 1674 which was soon followed by the loot of Bahadur Khan's camp in May 1674. The proposal for Mughal-Maratha peace in early 1675, too, could not work.

Bahadur Khan now planned to join hands with Bijapur (October, 1675) against Shivaji, but he failed following Khawas Khan's overthrow by Bahlol Khan (11 Nov. 1675). In the meantime, Bahadur Khan was severely censured by Aurangzeb. On the other side, the Maratha menace continued unabated. Diler Khan wanted to have a Mughal-Bijapur alliance against Golkonda and Shivaji. But the plan was made imperative by Madanna, the wazir of the Golkonda ruler, and by Akanna's great diplomacy (1677). Instead, Madanna entered into an alliance with Shivaji and agreed to pay one lakh huns annually for protection against the Mughals. He acknowledged Shivaji's possessions east of the Krishna river including the Kolhapur district. Golkonda also supported Shivaji in his Karnataka campaigns (1677-8).

But later Shivaji broke his promise to hand over Jinji and other regions to the Golkonda ruler. Thus arose a rift between the two and the Golkonda ruler stopped the annual payment to Shivaji. Shivaji's attempt to capture Bijapur fort through bribe also antagonised the Bijapur ruler.

Meanwhile, some rift developed over the question of succession issue in the Maratha court. Shivaji offered the Des and Konkan to his younger son Rajaram. While the newly annexed Karnataka was given to Sambhaji, the elder son. This was done by Shivaji keeping in view of the minority of Rajaram who was hardly in a position to administer the Karnataka—newly conquered territory. But Sambhaji was not ready to leave the more advantageous Des. Diler Khan (1678) tried to take advantage of the situation and offered Sambhaji his help in recovering Des and Konkan in return for his friendship. Sambhaji accepted the offer and a mansab of 7000 was awarded by the Mughals (December 1678).

At this time (1678) an idea of all out concerted effort of Golkonda, Bijapur and the Mughals against the Marathas was also floated but Siddi Masaud's (leader of the Deccani party in Bijapur court) alliance with Shivaji (1679) washed out that probability completely. Diler Khan now decided to go for an outright conquest of Bijapur but timely Maratha intervention averted that too (August 1679).

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Thus from the time of Jai Singh's withdrawal (1666) till 1680 when Aurangzeb finally embarked upon a forward policy of outright conquest this period i.e. the third phase seems to be a period of complete chaos and confusion. The Mughals could hardly plan to have a single track and instead they acted without direction and aim. They could neither succeed in befriending Marathas nor the Deccanis nor in toppling them altogether.

#### **10.5.4 Fourth Phase : 1680-1707**

The year 1680 is very important as far as Deccan history is concerned. Shivaji died in this very year (23 March), and Aurangzeb also decided to go in person to tackle the Deccan affairs. Now the Mughals embarked upon a policy of total conquest.

The period that followed immediately was not a smooth one for the Marathas. The issue of succession over the division of Shivaji's kingdom between his sons provided enough opportunity to the Maratha nobles to assert themselves. The mutual jealousies between Moro Trimbak, the Peshwa, and Annaji Datto, the sachiv and viceroy of the western provinces, worsened the situation. The Maratha nobles instead of confirming Sambhaji proclaimed Rajaram as the king. Sambhaji reacted fast and put Rajaram and Annaji Datto behind the bars (July, 1680). Annaji Datto attempted to reassert with the help of the rebel Mughal Prince Akbar. As soon as things came to be known to Sambhaji he started a policy of suppression. All the loyalists of Shivaji's reign had to face his wrath. Such strong was the suppression that many of the Shirkey family took asylum under the Mughals. This put the Maratha territory into complete chaos and lawlessness. Sambhaji, instead of setting the things right, indulged more and more in drunkenness and leisure. Soon the discipline of Shivaji's army was gone. Women frequented Maratha army camps while earlier they were strictly forbidden. All this had definite impact. It weakened the infant Maratha kingdom which could hardly sustain itself before the mighty Mughals.

On the other side, during his first four years of stay in the Deccan, Aurangzeb attempted to suppress the Maratha power with the help of the Deccani states who had given asylum to the rebel Prince Akbar. In spite of maintaining constant pressure (from 1680-1684), the Mughals could not achieve much. By 1684, Aurangzeb realized that he had to tackle Bijapur and Golkonda first. This resulted in the occupation of Bijapur (1686) and Golkonda (1687). But the decision (a plan which Jai Singh laid out as early as 1665 in coordination with the Marathas) came perhaps too late. By this time the Marathas had not only become more powerful but also succeeded in establishing a second line of defence in Karnataka. They were no longer the segmentary chieftains, but a formidable power with a king who was equal in status with other Deccani rulers.

While Aurangzeb was busy in tackling Bijapur and Golkonda rulers (1686-87), the Marathas devastated Mughal territories from Aurangabad to Burhanpur. Meanwhile, Mughal successes in Bijapur and Golkonda greatly enhanced the prestige of the Mughal army as well as their resources. Prince Akbar fled to Iran (1688). Sambhaji's behaviour also caused large scale defections in the Maratha camp who rallied around the Mughals. Under these circumstances, Sambhaji was imprisoned (February 1689) by the Mughals which finally resulted in his execution (11 March 1689).

The execution of Sambhaji (1689) introduced new dimensions into the Maratha politics. The Mughals, after defeating Bijapur and Golkonda, had to face severe resistance from the local elements—the *nayaks*, *valemas*, *deshmukhs* etc. The

imposition of Mughal administrative set up brought new agrarian tensions in the Deccan. The local landed aristocracy got almost displaced by the new one (the Mughal **jagirdars** and revenue farmers—the former failing to get the return preferred farming out against lump sum payment). Those who were deprived of their landed fiscal rights turned rebellious. The peasants had to face constant wrath from both the sides (for details, see Block 5 Units 18, 19). Further, more and more **mansabdars** were drawn from the South; the number of the Marathas alone (**mansab** holders of above 1000 **zat**) increased from 13 (Shah Jahan) to 96 (Aurangzeb), while the number of Deccani **mansabdars** reached 575 under Aurangzeb. This put pressure on **jagirs** as well and the crisis in the **jagir** system crept in. Factional fights started between the Deccani and the **Khanazad** nobles. Besides, constant warfare put a pressure on the Mughal treasury. Extended Mughal frontier also brought more problems as it became more vulnerable to the Maratha attacks. To add to this, the speedy recovery of the Marathas after Sambhaji's execution resulted in a series of Mughal reverses after 1693.

The Marathas rallied fast under Rajaram who fled to Pratapgarrh (5 April 1689). But Mughal pressure forced him to withdraw to Panhala where the Marathas defended themselves against the Mughals. But the Mughals soon occupied Raigarh (November, 1689) and Panhala, too, became accessible to them (September, 1689). Rajaram had to withdraw to Jinji. Satara fell to the Mughals in 1700 followed by Sinhaged. But, in spite of these successes, the Mughals were not able to capture Rajaram nor could they crush Maratha power. The Marathas continued their struggle unabated. They quickly recovered the lost territories. Not only all the gains were lost but also the hardships and miseries through which the Mughal forces had to pass were tremendous. This completely broke the morale of the Mughal army which looked totally shattered and weary. Aurangzeb by now had realized the futility of such a prolonged struggle and withdrew himself towards Ahmedabad. But, before he could adopt a conciliatory policy, he died in 1707.

To sum up, Satish Chandra has rightly pointed out that Aurangzeb's failure was his "inability to comprehend the nature of Maratha movement". To consider Shivaji a mere **bhumia** was his mistake. The Marathas had a popular base and the support of the local landed elements (**watandars**). His attempt to impose Mughal administrative practices created chaos among the local elements and brought suppression of the peasantry. The Mughal **mansabdars** found it almost impossible to collect their due from their Deccani **jagirs**. Sambhaji's execution was even a greater folly. Aurangzeb's idea of creating terror among the Marathas proved futile. He could neither suppress Marathas nor could he dictate terms to Shahu in his confinement.

(We are confining our discussion on Marathas only upto 1707. Shahu and the process of the emergence of the Peshwas in the early 18th century would be dealt with in Block 9, Unit 36).

### Check Your Progress 2

1) Write a short note on the rise of Maratha power under Bijapur rulers.

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2) Match the following :

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|------------------|----------|
| i) Shivaji       | Sindkher |
| ii) Yashwant Rao | Moray    |
| iii) Chunder Rao | Bhonsle  |
| iv) Jadav Rao    | Maval    |
| v) Jedhe Nayak   | Javli    |

Critically examine Jai Singh's Deccan policy.

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## 10.6 THE MARATHAS, AND THE SIDDIS OF JANJIRA

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Immediately after the conquest of Kalyan and Bhivandi (1658), Shivaji built up his naval bases there. His conquest of the south Konkan coast (1661) further expanded his naval might. This expansion brought the Marathas directly into contact with the naval power of the Siddis of Janjira, a rocky island 45 miles south of Bombay.

The Siddis were Abyssinians who had settled at Janjira in the 15th century. They got Danda-Rajpuri from Ahmednagar rulers. But the disruption of the Nizam Shahi state provided them the opportunity to act independently. When after the 1636 treaty the western coast fell under Bijapuri influence, there followed long-drawn clashes between the Siddis and the Bijapur rulers. Finally, they surrendered and accepted Bijapur's subjugation, and since then served as their 'wazir' with an added territory of Nagothna to Bankot. They promised the Bijapur rulers to protect the Mecca pilgrims at sea. The Siddis possessed an efficient naval fleet.

The Marathas came into direct contact with the Siddis during their operations in Konkan in pursuit of Afzal Khan (1659). The Siddis, as Bijapur vassals, supported Afzal Khan. Shivaji sent a strong force under Raghunath Ballal to suppress the Siddis. The Marathas wrested Tala, Ghonsala and the vast sea-coast up to Danda from the Siddis. But, the Siddis continued their struggle. By the treaty of Purandar (1665), the Mughals had agreed to leave Janjira to the Marathas, provided they conquer that. Marathas renewed their attacks in 1669-70 but failed in their designs in the wake of a combined attack of Bijapur-Mughal armies. Since then (1671) the entire naval force of the Siddis was transferred to the Mughals and the Siddi admirals (Siddi Qasim and Siddi Khairiyat) were enrolled as Mughal **mansabdars** and the Siddi fleet was taken over by the Mughals on the same terms as those of Bijapur. The title of Yaqut Khan was conferred on the Siddi generals by the Mughals. Soon the Siddis recovered Danda from the Marathas (1671). Shivaji tried to get English help but failed. This was followed by long struggle with fluctuating fortunes between the two (1672-80). These hostilities became more vigorous after Sambhaji. As early as 1681, the Siddis raided Maratha territory as far as Raigarh. However, Raghunath Prabhu was able to stall their conquests in 1682.

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## 10.7 THE MARATHAS THE ENGLISH AND THE PORTUGUESE

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The Marathas first came into contact with the English after the occupation of the port of Dabhol (January 1660). Their relations remained somewhat strained from the very beginning. In February 1660, the Marathas demanded that Afzal Khan's junks be handed over to them. In March 1661, the Marathas attacked English factors of Rajapur for supplying grenades to Bijapur rulers for use against the Panhala fort of the Marathas. In October 1670, Shivaji again harassed the English for not supplying arms to the Marathas. In May 1672, the English attempts at conciliation failed on account of the English failure to pay the required indemnity of 100,000 rupees. In 1673, the English sent another embassy led by Thomas Nicolls, but that too hardly bore fruits. However, in 1674 the embassy of Henry Oxinden was welcomed by Shivaji and he showed his willingness to buy 50 ordnances and guns. This was followed by the reopening of the English factory at Rajapur (1675). In 1675, the English asked Shivaji to pay for the damage done to the Company's factory at Dharangaon in Khandesh. In spite of long correspondences, Shivaji did not agree to it. Finally, the Rajapur factory was closed by Sambhaji in December 1682.

The Maratha-Portuguese relations were also far from cordial from the very beginning. The Portuguese supported the Siddis of Janjira against Shivaji. They gave refuge to the **desais** of south Ratnagiri who were dispossessed by Shivaji in Goa. Shivaji also claimed **chauth** from Daman. The presence of Shivaji's forces on the western coast also hindered Portuguese trade. But in spite of these differences, the Portuguese avoided a direct clash with the Marathas and treated them friendly. The Portuguese governor also avoided any open support to Shivaji's rivals. In June 1659 when Shivaji asked the Portuguese not to help the Abyssinians and Siddis of Danda, the Portuguese governor of Goa strictly warned his officers not to openly support the former. In December 1667, both entered into an alliance and Shivaji promised not to obstruct the Portuguese trade. The Portuguese also expelled the **desais** of south Ratnagiri. This treaty got renewed on 10 February 1670. Shivaji at that time also agreed not to build any fort in his dominion along the Portuguese frontier. But, during the closing years of Shivaji's reign (1676-77), relations between the two got strained over the payment of **chauth** to Shivaji. However, his untimely death averted any direct clash. In 1683, Shivaji's son Sambhaji personally attacked Chaul and Goa but he had to withdraw on account of the Mughal pressure.

### Check Your Progress 3

1) Who were Siddis?

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2) Discuss Maratha-Portuguese relations.

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## 10.8 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE MARATHAS

In the present section we are confining ourselves to central and provincial administrative set up and the military organisation of the Marathas. Discussion on agrarian relations and the village communities of the Marathas and their revenue system and finances will be dealt with in Block 5, Units 18 and 19.

The Maratha administration is essentially derived from the Deccani structure though some of its institutions are Mughal derivatives.

### 10.8.1 Central Administration

The Maratha polity was essentially a centralised autocratic monarchy but an enlightened one. The king was at the helm of affairs. The king's chief objective was the happiness and prosperity of his subjects (**raja kalsya karanam**).

To assist the king, there was a council of state ministers known as **ashtapradhan**:

- i) **Peshwa** (Prime Minister) : He was the head of both civil and military affairs.
- ii) **Mazumdar** (auditor) : He looked into the income and expenditure of the state.
- iii) **Wakins** : He was the incharge of king's private affairs.
- iv) **Dabir** : Foreign secretary
- v) **Surnis** (superintendent) : He used to take care of all the official correspondences.
- vi) **Pandit Rao** : Ecclesiastical head

vii) **Senapati** : Commander in chief

viii) **Nyayadhish** : Chief Justice

The **ashtapradhan** was neither the creation of Shivaji nor was at first organised at the time of his coronation. The **peshwa**, **mazumdar**, **wakins**, **dabir**, **surnis** (and the **sarnobat**) existed under the Deccani rulers also.

All, except **pandit rao** and **nyayadhish** were asked to lead military campaigns. Under Shivaji these offices were neither hereditary nor permanent: they held office till the king's pleasure and they were frequently transferred. They were directly paid by the exchequer and no **jagir** was granted to any civil or military officer. Later, under the **peshwas**, they assumed hereditary and permanent character. The council could advise the king but it was not binding on him to accept its advice.

Each of the **ashtapradhana** was assisted by eight assistants: **diwan**, **mazumdar**, **fadnis**, **sabnis**, **karkhanis**, **chitnis**, **jamadar** and **potnis**.

Next to **ashtapradhan** was **chitnis** (secretary) who dealt with all diplomatic correspondences and wrote all royal letters. Letters to provincial and district officers were also written by him. But responding to the letters of commanders of forts was the job of **fadnis**. The latter was a subordinate secretariat officer under Shivaji. This office rose to prominence under the **peshwas**. The **potnis** looked after the income and expenditure of the royal treasury, while the **potdar** was an assay officer.

### 10.8.2 Provincial Administration

The country was divided into **mauzas**, **tarfs** and **prants**. All these units were already existing under the Deccani rulers and were not the innovation of Shivaji. But he reorganised and renamed them. **Mauza** was the lowest unit. Then were the **tarfs** headed by a **havaladar**, **karkun** or **paripatyagar**. The provinces were known as **prants** under **subedar**, **karkun** (or **mukhya deshadhikari**). Over a number of **prants** there was the **sarsubedar** to control and supervise the work of **subedars**. Each **subedar** had eight subordinate officers: **diwan**, **mazumdar**, **fadnis**, **sabnis**, **karkhanis**, **chitnis**, **jamadar** and **potnis**. Later, under the **peshwas** **tarf**, **pargana**, **sarkar** and **suba** were indiscriminately used.

Under Shivaji none of the officers was permanent and hereditary. All officers were liable to frequent transfers. But under the **peshwas**, the office of **kamavisdar** and **mamlatdars** became permanent. To check the **mamlatdars**, there were **darkhdars** (fee men) who were hereditary provincial officers. They served as a check on **mamlatdars** and other naval and military officers. Neither the **mamlatdars** could dismiss them nor compel them to perform any particular job if not specified. None of the eight provincial level officers derived their power from **mamlatdar**. Instead, they served as a check on his power.

### 10.8.3 Military Organisation

Forts found the prime place in Shivaji's scheme of military organisation. Shivaji built such a long chain of forts that not a single **taluka** or **pargana** left without a fort. During his life, Shivaji constructed around 250 forts. No single officer was entrusted sole charge of a fort. Instead, in every fort there were a **havaladar**, a **sabnis** and a **sarnobat**. Big forts had five to ten **tat-sarnobats**. All these officers were of equal status and rank and were frequently transferred. This system acted as check and balance on each others' authority. The **havaladar** was the incharge of the keys of the fort. The **sabnis** controlled the muster-roll and dealt with all government correspondences. He also looked after the revenue-estimates of the province (under the jurisdiction of the fort). The **sarnobat** was the incharge of the garrison. Besides, there was **karkhanis** who used to take care of grain stores and other material requirements. All daily accounts of income and expenditure were to be entered by the **karkhanis**. None held absolute power. Though the **sabnis**, was the incharge of accounts, all orders had to bear the seal of the **havaladar** and the **karkhanis**. Similar was the case with other offices. Besides, no single officer could surrender the fort to the enemy. Thus, a good system of checks and balances was applied by Shivaji to keep them under control.



None of the officers was allowed to form caste groups. It was clearly specified that the **havaldar** and **sarnobat** should be a Maratha, while the **sabnis** a brahmin and the **karkhanis** a **prabhu** (kayastha).

The army organisation of Shivaji was not a novel experiment. Under Muhammad Adil Shah of Bijapur also we hear three officers as incharge of the fort. They were also frequently transferrable. The army organisation of Shivaji continued on the same lines under the **peshwas** as well.

Shivaji maintained light cavalry and light infantry trained in guerilla and hilly warfare. The **Mevalis** and the **Hetkaris** were his most excellent troopers.

The smallest unit in Shivaji's infantry consisted of 9 men headed by a **naik**. Five such units were under one **havaldar**. Over two or three **havaldars** was a **jumledar**. Ten **jumledars** were put under a **hazari** and seven such **hazaris** were under a **sarnobat**.

Shivaji's cavalry consisted of **bargirs** and the **siledars**. The **bargir** troopers were supplied horses and arms by the state while the **siledars** had to bring their own horses and arms. Over each group of 25 **bargirs** was a Maratha **havaldar**; five such **havaldars** formed a **jumla** and 10 **jumlas** a **hazari** and five such **hazaris** were placed under **panch hazari**. They were, in turn, under the command of **sarnobat**. The **siledars** were also placed under **sarnobat**. For every group of 25 horses there was a water-carrier and a farrier. Later, under the **peshwas**, the **pindhari**s who were robbers and plunderers were also allowed to accompany the army. In lieu of their services, they used to get the right to collect **palpatti** (which was 25 per cent of the war booty). They hardly spared any one—friend or foe; general public or temples (they plundered at will). Shivaji's army was well served by an efficient intelligence department whose chief was Bahirji Naik Jadav.

Shivaji also maintained body-guards, organised in regiments of 20,30,40,60 and 100. In time of need, the **watandars** were also asked to supply forces. But Shivaji hardly depended on such feudal levies of **watandars** or on **siledars**. Shivaji paid his soldiers in cash. Wounded soldiers used to get special allowance while the widows got state pensions. Under the **peshwas**, the entire country was divided into military tenures. They relied more on feudal levies. These feudal chieftains generally managed to make more than their legitimate share.

The **peshwas** established separate artillery department. Even they had their own factories for manufacturing cannon and cannon balls.

Later, under the **peshwas**, the strength of the cavalry increased. They maintained their own troops—**khasgi paga**. The **peshwas** tried to maintain disciplined battalions on European lines called **kampus**, but corruption crept among them also and they also did not lag behind in plundering the territories like their counterparts.

Shivaji's military strength lay in swift mobilisation, but **peshwa's** camps spread 'for miles in different direction'. Shivaji emphasized on strict discipline. Under the **peshwas** that discipline was gone. The Maratha armies were now full of luxuries and comforts. They possessed costly tents and splendid equipments. Wine and women became the very life of the contingent—a feature unthinkable in Shivaji's time. Shivaji never allowed any woman—female slaves or dancing girls—to accompany the army. Under the **peshwas** even ordinary horsemen were accompanied by their womenfolk, dancing girls, jugglers and **fakirs**. The **peshwa's** army was invariably paid in the form of **jagirs** (**saranjams**). All this shows distinct decline in the military strength of the Marathas under the **peshwas**.

Shivaji preferred to recruit men of his own race in the army but in the navy there were many Muslims. But the **peshwas** recruited men from all religions and ethnic group: Rajputs, Sikhs, Rohillas, Sindhis, Gosains, Karnatakis, Arabs, Telingas, Bidars, and Christians (Europeans).

#### 10.8.4 Navy

After the conquest of Konkan Shivaji built a strong navy as well. His fleet was equipped with **ghurabs** (gunboats) and **gallivats** (row boats with 2 masts and 40-50 oars). His fleet was mainly manned by the Koli sea-fearing tribe of Malabar coast. He

established two squadrons of 200 vessels each. But in all probability the number of vessels stated is exaggerated. Robert Orme mentions just 57 fleets of Shivaji under the command of Admiral Dariya Sarang and Mai Naik Bhandari. Daulat Khan was another admiral of Shivaji's navy.

Shivaji used his naval power to harass both the indigenous and European traders/powers. But Shivaji could hardly succeed in checking the Siddi menace. The peshwas also realized fully the importance of a strong navy: they maintained a strong fleet to defend the western coast. But the Maratha naval power reached distinction under the Angiras, practically independent from the peshwas.

### 10.8.5 Judiciary

The Marathas failed to develop any organised judicial department. At the village level, civil cases were heard by the village elders (panchayat) in patil's office or in the village temple. Criminal cases were decided by the patil. Hazir majalis was the highest court for civil and criminal cases. The sabhanak (judge president) and mahaprashnika (chief interrogator) gradually faded away under the peshwas whose duty was to examine and cross-examine the plaintiffs.

#### Check Your Progress 4

1) Who were ashtapradhans?

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2) Analyse the nature of Shivaji's administration.

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3) Discuss the changes brought about in the administrative structure under the peshwas.

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## 10.9 LET US SUM UP

The Maratha movement was neither a 'Hindu reaction' nor a national war of independence; its strength lay in the socio-economic formations of that period. Control of land, reaction against the exploitation of the superior landholders and the desire for upward social mobility—all these gave rise to the movement. An ideological background was provided by the bhakti saints. The Marathas, though served Ahmednagar and Bijapur rulers as early as 17th century, the decline of Ahmednagar rulers as well as constant Mughal pressure provided opportunity to them to acquire power. The decline of the Deccani kingdoms also helped in destroying the territorial integrity. The Mughals hardly saw them more than 'bhumias'. It was perhaps this folly that made it difficult for the Mughals to understand the real nature of the Maratha movement. Their assessment of them as mere robbers was a blunder. They had definite popular base which the Mughals

led to grasp. This perception prevented Aurangzeb from not agreeing to Jai Singh's plan to align with the Marathas. The Mughal Emperor always looked at the Maratha and Deccan problem independently but both were very much interrelated. Aurangzeb's realisation of the situation came too late. Murder of Sambhaji for striking terror was one more misjudgment of the situation. With the introduction of Mughal administration in the Deccan a new conflict started. The local landed elements were resentful since they were being deprived of their position; even the Mughal jagirdars found the situation too difficult to extract their due share. All this created such chaos and confusion that Aurangzeb found it almost impossible to handle. You would find (see Block 9, Unit 35) that the Deccan problem played its own role in the downfall of the Mughals.

Shivaji's administrative set up was not a new one, but he gave it a fresh colour by introducing more and more centralization. He avoided every possible configuration of various groups to assume political power. But such a set up could work efficiently only when an able person was there to administer. Soon, with the departure of Shivaji, a definite decline set in. Under the peshwas, corruption and slackness infected not only the central and provincial government but also the army. You will read in Block 9, Unit 36 how under the peshwas, the king's power gradually diminished and it virtually passed into the peshwas' hands during the 18th century.

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## 10.10 KEY WORDS

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- Bakhar** : a Marathi term for biographical accounts
- Bhumia** : a land holding caste
- Bargir** : troopers who were supplied horses and arms by the state
- Chitnis** : correspondence clerk
- Deshmukh** : they were equivalent to **chaudhris** (village headmen) of North India and **desais** of Gujarat (for details see Unit 19)
- Des** : Deccan plateau stretching eastwards from the Western Ghats
- Fadnis** : deputy auditor
- Ghatmatha**: high level tract or the table land of the Western Ghats
- Jamadar** : treasurer
- Karkhanis** : commissary; incharge of Karkhana
- Konkan** : western coast line; the low-land tract below the Western Ghats
- Kamavisdar**: under the peshwas he was the **subedar** of small provinces
- Khanazad** : sons of Khan
- Mamlatdar**: under the peshwas he was the **subedar** (governor) of bigger provinces. They were directly under the central government with the exception of Khandesh, Gujarat and Karnatak where they were placed under **sarsubedars**.
- Mazumdar** : auditor and accountant
- Potnis** : cash keeper
- Qiltadar** : incharge of a fort
- Sabnis** : daftadar
- Silehdar** : hired troopers; they were to bring their own arms and horses
- Watan** : hereditary land holdings

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## 10.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sec. 10.2
- 2) i) X ii) X iii) ✓ iv) ✓
- 3) Discuss how some historians believe that Maratha movement was a Hindu reaction. Then argue how we can not call it 'Hindu' reaction rather other factors were instrumental in their rise. See Sec. 10.3

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sec. 10.4
- 2) i) Bhonsle ii) Javli iii) Moray iv) Sindkher v) Maival
- 3) See Sub-sec. 10.5.2. Discuss how he proposed a master plan of Mughal-Maratha alliance against Bijapur and Golkonda. But it grossly failed on account of half-hearted cooperation of Aurangzeb.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sec. 10.6
- 2) See Sec. 10.7

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Discuss their names and functions. See Sub-sec. 10.8.1
- 2) See Sec. 10.8 and its sub-secs. Analyse whether Shivaji brought altogether new features in his administrative set up or it was continuation of the old system with certain modifications and better vigilance.
- 3) See Sec. 10.8 and its sub-secs. Discuss how under the Peshwas deterioration crept in every part of the administration that ultimately led to their decline.

# UNIT 11 RAJPUT STATES

## Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Background : Babur, Humayun and the Rajputs
- 11.3 Akbar's Relations with the Rajputs
  - 11.3.1 The First Phase
  - 11.3.2 The Second Phase
  - 11.3.3 The Third Phase
- 11.4 The Rajput States (Rajasthan)
  - 11.4.1 Amber (Jaipur)
  - 11.4.2 Marwar (Jodhpur)
  - 11.4.3 Bikaner
  - 11.4.4 Mewar
  - 11.4.5 Jaisalmer
  - 11.4.6 Bundi and Kota
- 11.5 The Rajput States in Central India
- 11.6 Other Rajput States
  - 11.6.1 Baglana and Idar
  - 11.6.2 Hill Rajput States
- 11.7 Mughal-Rajput Relations in the Seventeenth Century
- 11.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.9 Key Words
- 11.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

## 11.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to :

- understand the policy Babar and Humayun adopted towards the Rajputs;
- demarcate the three phases in Akbar's relations with the Rajputs;
- understand in brief the emergence of powerful Rajput States in Central India and Rajasthan and other minor Rajput states and their political relations with the Mughals; and
- analyse the nature of Mughal-Rajput relations in the 17th Century.

## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

The Mughal policy towards the Rajputs contributed to the expansion and consolidation of the Mughal Empire under Akbar and his successors. For long it has been held that the Mughal alliance with the Rajputs was determined by personal religious beliefs of the individual rulers. On this basis, Akbar's liberalism and Aurangzeb's orthodoxy were considered the touchstone of their policies and its impact on the political scene. However, recently the Mughal-Rajput relations are being studied within the framework of Mughal nobility as well as the tensions within the different segments of the nobility itself.

A centralised bureaucratic empire like that of the Mughals was confronted with the problem of distribution of power between its various components. The political

vicissitudes of the Mughal Empire were governed to a large extent by the struggle for supremacy or autonomy by the aristocratic elements, i.e., the Mughal bureaucracy and the autonomous *raj*s and *zamindars*. The socio-cultural factors and the geo-strategic context of the country are equally important to be taken into account. Rajasthan (which was the connecting link between the Gangetic valley and the coastal belt of western India) and Malwa in Central India played a pivotal role in determining the early course of political events in North India. The Mughal-Rajput conflict cannot be understood independently but should be seen as part of a conflict which had a past history. It developed against the backdrop of the decline of the Delhi Sultanate and the emergence of a new state system in Rajasthan, Malwa and Gujarat.

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## 11.2 BACKGROUND: BABUR, HUMAYUN AND THE RAJPUTS

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With the decline of Jaunpur and the weakening of Malwa towards the end of the 15th century, a new situation developed in North India. There was the contest between Rana Sanga of Mewar and the Lodis for domination over eastern Rajasthan and Malwa. Sanga feared the strengthening of Lodi power and therefore opened negotiations with Babur against the Lodis. As Babur progressed in accordance with the agreement, Sanga retraced his steps. He had not envisaged Babur's arrival in the Gangetic valley. His plan was to detain Babur in the Punjab while he confronted the Lodis in the Gangetic valley. The ascendancy of Babur in the Gangetic valley took Sanga by surprise. These developments led to the formation of an alliance between the Afghans, Rana Sanga and a host of other Rajput princes. The aim was to hold back the advance of Babur towards Delhi and the surrounding areas. So far no Rajput ruler had been successful in mustering support of such disparate groups as Rajputs and Afghans. The conflict between Sanga's coalition and Babur at Khanwa was not a contest between Hindus and Muslims. This is amply borne out by the very nature of the composition of Sanga's coalition. Babur condemned the Afghan chieftains who collaborated with Sanga as *kafirs* infidels and *mulhids* and also proclaimed the contest against Sanga as *jihad*. These actions do not suggest religious zeal but reflect the attempt to meet the challenge by appealing to the religious sentiments of his soldiers. Later on, Babur concentrated more on countering the Afghan danger than fighting the Rajputs. He tried to secure his control over the region adjoining Delhi-Agra zone. Outposts such as Bayana, Dholpur, Gwalior were firmly brought under control. Mewar and Chanderi in Malwa were taken. The death of Rana Sanga settled the problem as far as Rajasthan was concerned.

Babur wished to follow a forward policy in Mewar and Malwa but his practical understanding prevented him from taking up this policy till the Afghan problem in the east had been solved. During Babur's time, the relations between the Mughals and Rajputs did not develop along definite and positive lines, rather it was in consonance with the political needs.

When Humayun ascended the throne, the political scene in Malwa and Rajasthan had changed considerably. Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, had captured Malwa after defeating its ruler Mahmud Khalji II. Rana Ratan Singh of Mewar had sided with Bahadur Shah against Malwa for which he was generously rewarded. This was an act of political expediency. However, a rupture between Rana Vikramjit of Mewar and Bahadur Shah led to siege of Chittor by the later. Though Humayun was aware of the threat posed by the augmentation of the power of Bahadur Shah in Malwa and Rajasthan, he was hesitant to get involved in the conflict with Bahadur Shah till the Afghan threat had been sorted out. Humayun's stance as regards Rajasthan was essentially defence oriented: an offensive policy was postponed for a later date. He also realised that due to internecine warfare in Mewar its power was waning. Therefore, for Humayun, its military importance as an ally was inadequate.

Humayun who joined the struggle on Chittor's side had not anticipated the power of Gujarat artillery and had overestimated the military strength of Chittor in the wake of the siege. Bahadur Shah, on the other hand, had not expected Humayun to counter him in a contest against a Hindu ruler. Chittor was devastated but Bahadur Shah's success was shortlived.

Babur and Humayun's relations with Rajputs should be viewed in the context of the Afghan problem which deterred them from making friendly overtures to the Rajput rulers.

## 11.3 AKBAR'S RELATIONS WITH THE RAJPUTS

We can perceive three phases in the shaping of Akbar's Rajput policy. During the first phase, which ended in 1569-70, Akbar continued with the policy followed by the Delhi Sultans; in the second phase, Akbar tried to develop and extend the alliance with Rajputs but certain components of the earlier policy were retained; the third and last phase is marked by Akbar's break with Muslim orthodoxy.

### 11.3.1 The First Phase

There has been a lot of debate on Akbar's relations with the Rajputs. Some argue that his policy initiated a system in which there would be no discrimination on the basis of religion in public appointments. Others hold that it was a deliberate attempt to exploit the martial attributes of the Rajputs for the expansion of the Empire and also to play them against each other thereby ensuring that they would not unitedly pose a threat to the Empire. It is also stated that Akbar's Rajput policy was a part of a broad policy of wooing the **zamindars** and martial classes which included the Rajputs and Afghans. Majority of the **zamindars** were Hindus and specially Rajputs. It is pointed out that the policy was aimed at using the Rajputs to counter the power of the Uzbeks and other disaffected nobles. Faithfulness of Rajputs was legendary. They could serve as important buttresses both within the court and outside.

Rajputs had made an impression on Akbar's mind way back in 1557 when a Rajput contingent under Bhara Mal, the ruler of Amber, had demonstrated its loyalty to Akbar. This led to a matrimonial alliance between Bhara Mal's daughter and Akbar in 1562. But this matrimonial alliance was not unique and such alliances were a common feature before Akbar's time also. These marriages were in the nature of political compromise and did not imply conversion to Islam and break with Hindu traditions. Bhara Mal had submitted to Akbar by personally paying homage to him in 1562. By encouraging this practice, Akbar was trying to establish intimate relations with those chieftains who submitted to him personally. A personal relationship, it was felt, would best ensure political allegiance. Akbar's period thus ushered in an era of personal fidelity. Matrimonial alliances did not lead to any kind of special bond between Rajputs and Mughals. Nor were these alliances with Rajputs intended to be aimed at countering recalcitrant elements or using the Rajputs for military gains. The fact that Rajputs did participate in Mughal wars against their compatriots was not unprecedented. The liberal measures such as abolition of **jiziya**, remission of pilgrim taxes, etc. which Akbar introduced between 1562-64, strengthened people's faith in Akbar as a liberal ruler. But these measures did not create an atmosphere of total peace between the Mughals and Rajputs. The war with Chittor, is an apt example. The Rajputs offered firm resistance despite the presence of Bhagwant Singh with Akbar. Akbar on the other hand proclaimed the conflict as **jihad** and martyrs as **ghazis** giving the whole affair a religious colour. He ascribed his victory to God's will, thereby emphasising the religious dimension of the conflict.

In the first phase, Akbar's attitude towards Rajputs softened and Rao Dalpat Rai, the governor (**hakim**) of Ranthambhor, was accepted in the imperial service and given **jagir**. Akbar married Bhagwant Singh's (Kachhawa prince) sister. That Bhara Mal became a close confidant of Akbar is evident from the fact that when Akbar proceeded on the Gujarat campaign, Agra was placed under his charge a gesture shown for the first time to a Hindu Prince. However, Akbar's religious views his public policies and attitude towards Rajputs developed along separate lines and coincided only at a later stage.

### 11.3.2 The Second Phase

Towards the end of 1570, the relations with Rajputs were further established. Rai Kalyan Mal of Bikanar submitted to Akbar by paying homage personally along with his son. Rawal Har Rai of Jaisalmer and Kalyan Mal's daughters were married to

Akbar. Both *rajās* were firmly entrenched in their principalities and enrolled in the Imperial service. The Gujarat expedition of Akbar was an important landmark in the evolution of Mughal-Rajput relations. The Rajputs were enlisted as soldiers systematically and their salaries were fixed for the first time. Thus, the Rajputs were deployed outside Rajasthan for the first time and were given significant assignments and posts. During the Gujarat insurrection of the Mirzas, Akbar depended largely on Rajputs—(Kachawahas) Man Singh and Bhagwant Singh. Akbar also had to deal with the Mewar problem. The Rana of Mewar did not agree to personal submission and wanted to regain Chittor. Akbar remained firm on the principle of personal homage. In the meantime Marwar was subdued by Akbar.

The battle of Haldighati between the Rana of Mewar and Akbar was not a struggle between Hindus and Muslims. As important groups from among the Rajputs sided with the Mughals, this struggle cannot be termed as a struggle for independence from foreign rule. It can to some extent be characterized as the pronouncement of the ideal of regional independence. In the 16th century India, the feelings of local and regional loyalty were very powerful which could be further strengthened by emphasis on conventions and traditions. However, this catchword could not be very helpful in the long run since there was no supreme regional power amongst the Rajput states. They were vulnerable to internecine warfare and its disastrous consequences. The states located along the borders of Mewar submitted to Akbar and entered into matrimonial alliances. These states had close relations with Mewar but had always pursued a practical policy of allying with whosoever was the dominant power in the area. The ruler of Bundi and Marwar, who were in league with the Rana, were subdued. Thus, the Rana's power suffered a severe jolt and Rajputs were transformed from mere collaborators into allies of the Mughals.

Till the end of the second phase, Akbar's Rajput policy had not acquired a shape which would be disapproved by the Muslim orthodox religious elements or which would be a threat to the Muslim character of the state. Or else why an orthodox person like Badauni commended the Mewar campaign?

### 11.3.3 The Third Phase

The reimposition of *jizya* by Akbar in 1575, which was a step in preparation for war with Mewar, shows that Akbar had to rely on religion for serving political ends. The fall from power of the chief *sadr* Abdun Nabi and the proclamation of the *mahzar* are important events which constitute the starting point of Akbar's break with orthodoxy.

During the invasion on Punjab by Akbar's brother Mirza Hakim (the ruler of Kabul) in 1580, Akbar relied upon Rajputs such as Man Singh and Bhagwant Singh who displayed considerable valour during the siege and successfully resisted it. Akbar rewarded them by making Bhagwant Das the governor of Lahore and Man Singh the commander of the Indus region. An important consequence of Mirza Hakim's invasion was that from now onwards the Rajputs became the sword-arm of the Empire and became actively involved in Mughal administration.

A group among the nobility displayed fear over the ascendancy of Rajputs. However Akbar was strong enough to brush aside such feelings and continued to rely on the Rajputs.

Akbar tried to forge close relations with the Rajput ruling houses. The Kachhawaha family occupied a special position in the gamut of Mughal-Rajput relations. In 1580, Mani Bai, the daughter of Bhagwant Das, was married to Prince Salim. In 1583, Jodhpur, which was a part of *khalisa* was bestowed upon Mota Raja Udai Singh (Marwar) and his daughter was married to Salim. Rai Kalyan Singh's (Bikaner) daughter and Rawal Bhim's (Jaisalmer) daughters were also married to Salim. Prince Daniyal was married to a daughter of Raimal of Jodhpur.

These marriages reveal Akbar's desire to compell his successor to the throne to carry on the policy of maintaining close relationship with the Rajputs. In 1583-84, Akbar initiated a new policy of selecting loyal Muslim and Hindu nobles for performing administrative tasks. Thus, the son of Bhara Mal and Rai Lonkaran Shekhawat were



work after armour and roads; household management was placed under Raisal Darbari (Kachhawaha); Raja Askaran Kachhawaha of Narwan was assigned the task of supervising the property of minors; Jagmal Panwar, associated with Raja Bhagwant Das and Man Singh, was incharge of the department of jewels and other minerals; Rai Durga Sisodia of Rampura and Raja Todar Mal were assigned administrative tasks in the revenue department and Rai Surjan Hada was to bring matters relating to religion and faith to Prince Daniyal. Raja Birbal was a close associate of Akbar and was responsible for justice. It cannot be said with certainty to what extent this policy of deploying Rajputs for carrying out administrative tasks was successful. Abul Fazl gives the impression that it was not properly implemented.

The year 1585-86 marks an important landmark in the administrative sphere when the *subas* were given an administrative shape. Each *suba* was to have two *amirs* or *sipahsalar*s as well as a *diwan* and a *bakhshi*. The Kachhawahas got the largest share of appointments among Rajputs. Lahore was given to Raja Bhagwant Das and Rai Singh of Bikaner, Kabul to Man Singh, Agra to Raja Askaran Shekhawat, Ajmer to Jagannath (son of Bhara Mal). The Rathors and Sisodias were also employed in the administrative set up but not on a very large scale.

By 1585-86, Akbar's Rajput policy had become fully developed. The alliance with Rajputs had become steady and stable. The Rajputs were now not only allies but were partners in the Empire. Conflict with the Rana of Mewar did not lead to bitterness in relations with other Rajput states of Rajasthan. Finally, the dispute with the Rana was settled and he spent the rest of his life in Chawand in South Mewar (his capital).

For analysing the relations with Rajputs in Akbar's reign, the year 1585-86 can be taken as a convenient point. Among the Rajputs enlisted in the Imperial Service, the Kachhawahas reigned supreme. In the *mansabdari* (ranking system) which was developed by Akbar the Kachhawahas held a dominant position. In the list of *mansabdars*, as given in the *Ain-i Akbari* of the 24 Rajputs 13 were Kachhawahas. Among Kachhawahas only members of Bhara Mal's family held ranks of 1500 *zat* or above. The only non-Kachhawaha Rajput who held a high rank and important posts was Rai Singh of Bikaner.

A study of the state structure of the Rajputs is important for understanding their relations with the Mughals. On the eve of the Mughal conquests, the administrative structure was based on what is called *bhaibant* system. It was a sort of a loose confederation in which a region was held by a clan or *khap* by one or more family which had close kinship ties with the clan. A member of the leading family was called *rao/rai—rana*. There was no definite law of succession both primogeniture and the will of the ruler prevailed. But the deciding factors were the support of Rajput *sardars* (chieftains) and military might. A clan held a region relying on the support of Rajput warriors. The leading family of a clan held only a few *parganas* or *mahals* under direct control in a region and the rest were assigned in *patta* to individual members of the family who erected their own fortresses or places of residence called *basi* or *kothri*. Holders of these fortresses were called *dhani* or *thakur*. These holdings were hereditary. In these circumstances the Rana tried to extend the holding at the expense of the *thikanedars* (clan brothers) whereas the clan attempted to gain at the cost of neighbouring clans.

When a Rajput *raja* was enrolled in the Imperial service, he was given *jagir* against his *mansab* which consisted of *mahals* or *tappas* where the clan members lived. The *mahals* were a part of one or more *parganas* with a fort or *garhi* where the *raja* resided with his family. This region was the real *watan* of the *raja* though, occasionally, the term was extended to mean the entire tract held by the *raja* and his clansmen. Jahangir refers to this as *riyasat*. The term *watan jagir* came into vogue only at the end of Akbar's reign. *Jagirs* in close proximity to *watan* were considered a part of the *watan* and were not transferrable except in case of rebellion, etc. These *watan jagirs* were granted for life within Rajasthan. Outside Rajasthan, *jagirs* were transferrable. The term *watan jagir* is not referred to by Abul Fazl and other contemporary historians. The first reference to this is contained in a *farman* of Akbar to Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner. The Rajput chronicles, for example, Nainsi has a word *utan* which could be a corruption of *watan*.

The change in the state structure of Rajasthan and the evolution of the concept of **watan jagir** which replaced **bhaibant** is an interesting phenomena. By Jahangir's time the concept of **watan jagir** was firmly entrenched. Areas held by clan members and other clans were brought under the control of the **raja**. **Watan jagirs** allowed the **rajas** to consolidate their position vis-a-vis the **pattayats** which was a step towards the evolution of a stable and centralised state structure. **Watan** and **riyasat** at times overlapped.

When a **raja** died all the **parganas** controlled by him as **watan jagir** were not inevitably inherited by his successor. His successor was given a few **parganas** according to his **mansab** which was lower than that of his predecessor. Thus, **jagir** rights in a **pargana** were partitioned. This was a means of exercising control over the Rajput **rajas**.

Dispute among the Rajputs for control of certain territories was a problem in which Akbar also got entangled. For example, Pokharan was claimed by the Bhatias of Jaisalmer and rulers of Bikaner and Jodhpur. Akbar had assigned it to Mota Raja and later to Suraj Singh, but the Bhatias continued to resist and dispute could not be settled in Akbar's time.

The Mughals did not try to create dissensions among the Rajputs but they were aware of dissensions among the Rajputs on the basis of clan and personal holdings and took advantage of these differences for their own ends. For example, they transferred disputed **parganas** from one to another. The Mughal control over an autonomous **raja** was determined by the Mughal concept of paramountcy, attitudes of traditional ruling elites and political expediency. In Akbar's time Chittor and Ranthambhor forts were under Mughal appointees. The **rajas** assessed and collected land revenue according to their custom and norms, but imposition of certain taxes was disallowed. However, there was no machinery to enforce these prohibitions which were often ignored by small **rajas**. Marwar was under direct Mughal rule from 1563 to 1583. Parts of Mewar were directly controlled by the Mughals from 1568 to the early years of Jahangir's reign.

The Rajput **rajas** were granted **jagirs** outside their **watan** in neighbouring **subas** or in **subas** where they served. The **jagirs** were situated either in productive areas or in **zortslab** (rebellious) areas. The proportion of **jagirs** granted in Rajasthan and outside differed from case to case. Additional income from **jagirs** outside traditional holdings was important. **Jagirs** in Rajasthan were a more attractive proposition for the Rajputs as they carried a lot of prestige and enabled them to maintain their links with the clan which was the foundation of their power.

The establishment of a sort of **Pax Mughalica** (Mughal peace) was important if the Rajput **rajas** were to serve in different parts of the Empire without being bothered about their homelands. This meant regulation of inter-state disputes and disputes among the Rajput **rajas** and **sardars**. The Mughal policy of conferring honour on anyone was a part of the process of weakening the aristocracy by instigating the middle and lower strata to assert their independence from aristocracy. Therefore, the Mughals enlisted in the Imperial service many minor feudatories of the Rajput **rajas** themselves.

The issue of succession had invariably caused fratricidal civil wars in Rajput states. The concept of Mughal Paramountcy implied controlling succession to the throne in these states. This was not an easy task: it depended on the strength of the Mughal ruler. Akbar had pronounced that the grant of **tika** was the prerogative of the Mughal Emperor and could not be claimed as a matter of right. The fact that the Mughal Emperor could give **tika** to sons of the deceased **raja** or his brother or brother's son could lead to conflicts. But, at least, the issue could be settled without a civil war due to Mughal intervention.

As the **mansab** system developed, Akbar tried to encourage nobles to maintain mixed contingents consisting of ethnic groups like the Mughals, Rajputs etc. However this was not acceptable to many and exclusive contingents of Rajputs and Mughals were still maintained. The Rajput soldier was paid a salary lower than his Mughal counterpart but how far this encouraged nobles to employ Rajputs is not known. Akbar tried to promote heterogeneous contingents to cut across the ethnic-religious

distinctions. But we find that under Akbar and his successors ethnic-religious ties could not be weakened. Many nobles disliked the importance given to the Rajputs in the Imperial service. The Rajputs, too, found it difficult at first to adjust to the discipline in the Mughal service.

Akbar's alliance with the Rajputs began as a political coalition but later, it developed into an instrument of closer relations between Hindus and Muslims which formed the basis for a broad liberal tolerant policy towards all, irrespective of faith. Around this time, the concept of justice also became extensive. It was stressed that justice should be dispensed to all irrespective of religion, faith, caste and race. Thus Mughal-Rajput relations were seen as the beginning of a secular, non-sectarian state in which all sections of people would have some interest in its continuation. But this was not in accordance with the social and political reality. The Rajputs were generally orthodox in their social and religious outlook. They refused to enroll themselves in Akbar's *tauhid ilahi* and also did not support Akbar in opposing *sati*. Like the Rajputs, the Mughal elite was also generally orthodox. The Mughal elite and *ulema* feared that a broad liberal policy would be detrimental to their dominant position. Their opposition could be put down only by furthering the Mughal-Rajput alliance supported by powerful non-sectarian movements stressing common points between followers of the two religions. These movements were limited in their influence and the Mughal-Rajput alliance having no powerful bulwark became strained and collapsed.

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## 11.4 THE RAJPUT STATES (RAJASTHAN)

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Amber, Mewar, Marwar, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Bundi and Kota were some of the important Rajput states in Rajasthan. We will briefly discuss their emergence as powerful Rajput states and their political relations with the Mughals.

### 11.4.1 Amber (Jaipur)

Amber is identified with the present day Jaipur. Located in eastern Rajasthan, it was ruled by the Kachhawahas. During the early years of Akbar's reign, the ruler of Amber was Raja Bharmal. We have already discussed Akbar's relations with Amber.

At the time of Akbar's death, the relationship of Raja Man Singh with Prince Salim became estranged. Raja Man Singh in league with Aziz Koka, (a Mughal noble) favoured the candidature of Prince Khusrau against Salim for the Mughal throne. Khusrau was the nephew (sister's son) of Man Singh and the son-in-law of Aziz Koka. This issue also divided the Kachhawahas. Ram Das and Raisal Darbari sided with Salim. At that time, both were in charge of the *Khazana-i-amira* (imperial treasury). Man Singh and Aziz Koka wanted to gain control over the treasury but those in charge of the treasury resisted and succeeded in safeguarding the treasury. Eventually when Jahangir became the Emperor, he was hostile to Man Singh and others who had opposed him. Man Singh was sent away to Bengal, and none of the Kachhawa nobles were given the charge of any office throughout Jahangir's reign. Ram Das and Raisal Darbari were favoured and were raised to the rank of 5000 *zat*. Though Jahangir was unhappy with Man Singh, political exigency did not allow him to sever his relations with the powerful Kachhawaha chieftain. Therefore, in 1608, he married the daughter of Man Singh's deceased eldest son Jagat Singh. Raja Man Singh held the rank of 7000 *zat* and 7000 *sawar* till his death in 1614-15.

In 1614, Jahangir, instead of granting the *gaddi* of Amber to Maha Singh, gave *tilka* to Bhao Singh who was also given the title of Mirza Raja and a rank of 4000 *zat* which was raised to 5000 *zat*. According to the law of primogeniture prevailing among the Kachhawaha clan, the *gaddi* should have gone to Maha Singh who was the son of Jagat Singh, the deceased eldest son of Man Singh. During Prince Khurram's rebellion, the Kachhawaha chieftain Mirza Raja Jai Singh was cautious and showed his indifference to the whole affair. His neutrality earned him the goodwill of Prince Khurram. When the latter became the Emperor, Jai Singh was given promotions and assigned some offices. Mirza Raja Jai Singh, who held the *mansab* of 4000 *zat* and

2,500 *sawar* at the time of Shah Jahan's accession, continued to earn promotions during the course of military service in the Deccan. By 1637 he had acquired the status of 7000 *zat* and 7000 *sawar*. He served as a commander during Aurangzeb's expeditions against Balkh and Qandahar. Besides the Mirza, many other Kachhawaha nobles also held ranks of various degrees. Many offices such as *faujdar* and *quila' dar* were assigned to them. In c. 1650, Mirza Raja Jai Singh became the *faujdar* of Delhi and, in the same year, his son Kirat Singh became the *faujdar* of Mewat. Earlier, Mirza Raja Jai Singh was appointed *subadar* of Agra and *faujdar* of Mathura.

In the war of succession between Princes Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb, Mirza Raja Jai Singh favoured the imperial cause and earned promotions. Jaswant Singh superseded Jai Singh in the hierarchy due to Dara's support who was favoured by Shah Jahan. Jai Singh's nephew's daughter was married to Dara's son. By distinguishing himself against Prince Shuja in the eastern part of India, Mirza Raja Jai Singh had acquired the *mansab* of 7000 *zat* and 7000 *sawar* (5000 *du aspa sih aspa*). After the battle of Samugarh when Aurangzeb's position had become strong, the Raja and his son Ram Singh defected to Aurangzeb's side. Aurangzeb rewarded him with the *jagir* of one *kror dams*. He became a close confidant of Aurangzeb. The Raja continued to render military service to Aurangzeb. He remained in the Deccan and fought against the Marathas, Bijapur and Golconda. After Shivaji's escape from Agra, he was removed from the viceroyalty of Deccan. Shivaji was in his son's custody and Aurangzeb blamed him for the flight. After him, the Amber state was governed by his son Ram Singh and great-grandson Bishan Singh. During the period of Sawai Jai Singh, (1609-1743), the Amber state became powerful. In 1707, after Aurangzeb's death, there ensued the succession problem. Sawai Jai Singh became entangled in the succession strife. He was disliked by the new emperor Bahadur Shah who first installed Jai Singh's brother Bijay Singh as the chieftain of Amber and subsequently the Emperor brought Amber state under imperial control. But, in the subsequent period, Sawai Jai Singh got possession of Amber. Taking advantage of internecine conflicts and party politics at the royal court, he expanded his power and prestige by enlarging the boundaries of the Amber state. He founded a new city, Jainagar, presently known as Jaipur. At the time of accession, he possessed a small territory around Amber, but he sought revenue assignments of many *parganas* around Amber region, and also took revenue contracts (*ijara*) of many *parganas*. In this way, he succeeded in establishing the powerful Jaipur state.

#### 11.4.2 Marwar (Jodhpur)

The Rathor chieftains of Jodhpur came from Qannauj region and established a monarchy. Rao Jodha (1446-53) founded the city of Jodhpur and it became the seat of power. Gradually, the Rathors extended their control over the large desert tract of north-west Rajasthan. Many Rathor states, namely Merta, Bikaner, Kishangarh and Nagaur came into existence, and the ruling families of these states had lineage links with the Rathor family of Jodhpur. In 1563-64, Jodhpur under Chandrasen was subdued by Akbar. It was conferred upon Mota Raja in 1583. Matrimonial alliances were established with the ruler of Marwar and *mansabs* were granted to him and his sons.

During Jahangir's reign, after meritorious services in the Deccan and the Chittor expedition, Suraj Singh had earned the position of 5000 *zat*. After his death in 1619, his son Gaj Singh was granted the *gaddi* of Jodhpur and the *mansab* of 3000 *zat* and 2000 *sawar*. Gaj Singh served in Deccan and rose to the rank of 5000 *zat* and 5000 *sawar*. He did not participate actively against Shah Jahan who had rebelled against Jahangir. When Shah Jahan became the Emperor, Gaj Singh was confirmed in his previous rank. He was deputed against the rebel Mughal noble Khan Jahan Lodi and thereafter against Adil Shah of Bijapur.

After his death in 1638, according to his will, the *gaddi* of Jodhpur was conferred on his younger son Jaswant Singh instead of the eldest son Amar Singh. Jaswant Singh was also given the title of Raja and the *mansab* of 4000 *zat*/ 4000 *sawar*. Shah Jahan also gratified Amar Singh (who was in Kabul), by augmenting his status to 3000 *zat* and 3000 *sawar* with the title of *rao*. He was also favoured with the grant of a new *watan jagir* in Nagaur. Shah Jahan's generosity was on account of Jaswant and Amar Singh's blood relationship with the Emperor's mother Jagat Gosain.

Raja Jaswant Singh rendered service in Qandahar first under the command of Prince Dara Shukoh and thereafter under Prince Aurangzeb. Earlier he was the acting governor of Agra. The Raja had now acquired the status of 6000 **zat** and 6000 **sawar** (5000 **du aspa sih aspa**). His status was further raised by grant of the title of Maharaja and he fought on the imperial side against Aurangzeb in the battles of Dharmat and Samugarh which he lost. On the eve of this struggle, Jaswant Singh's **mansab** was raised to 7000 **zat** and 7000 **sawar** (6000 **du aspa sih aspa**). Jaswant Singh's sympathy with Shah Jahan and Dara Shukoh and his frequent defections had vexed Aurangzeb and the latter confiscated his **gaddi** of Jodhpur and conferred it on his nephew Rao Rai Singh, the son of Amar Singh of Nagaur. The Rajputs had no special sympathy for Dara nor Aurangzeb had any reservations regarding the Rajputs. But when eventually Aurangzeb emerged successful in the war of succession he reinstated Jaswant Singh on his **gaddi** as well as to his **mansab**. He was also appointed governor of Gujarat. It was not advisable for the Mughal Emperor to annoy the powerful Rajput chieftain who commanded a large following. Aurangzeb followed the policy of winning over the Rajputs. Thereafter, Jaswant Singh rendered services in Deccan and Afghanistan. However, his negligent conduct during and after Shivaji's surprise attack on Shaista Khan's camp in 1662 was a source of worry to Aurangzeb. Jaswant Singh was charged with sympathising with Shivaji but Aurangzeb continued to favour him. His last assignment was as **thanedar** of Jamrud in Afghanistan. This was a low post and amounted to demotion and virtual banishment to far-off places away from the Mughal court. After his death, the Rajputs were not involved in Aurangzeb's Deccan campaigns which signalled the revival of a forward policy in the Deccan after 1676. This formed the background of Aurangzeb's breach with Mewar and Marwar.

Although Aurangzeb was orthodox in his religious views in the early years of his reign, the Rajputs became partners in the Empire. Gradually, however, relations between the two became strained. The acts of territorial aggrandizement, and, matrimonial alliances contracted by the Rajput **Rajas** without the Mughal Emperor's consent were resented by Aurangzeb.

A major crisis which occurred around this time is popularly known as the Rathor Rebellion. Jaswant Singh had a son Prithvi Singh who had died during his lifetime. At the time of his death, his two wives were pregnant but there was no certainty of the birth of a male child. It was also not possible to keep the Jodhpur **gaddi** vacant for a long time. The **gaddi** could also not be conferred on Rani Hadi (the chief queen) according to the Rajput tradition. The rule of primogeniture did not prevail among the Rathors and the son whose mother was the favourite of the father was nominated to the **gaddi**. In case the successor was a minor, the state was administered by an Imperial nominee. In Marwar there were two claimants to the **gaddi**—Rao Anup Singh of Bikaner (the son of a daughter of Amar Singh) and Indra Singh of Nagaur (his grandfather was Amar Singh whose claims to the throne of Marwar had been set aside when his younger brother Jaswant Singh was given the **gaddi** of Marwar). Both offered a huge amount of **peshkash** (tribute) and Anup Singh also volunteered to escheat Jaswant Singh's property to realize the dues he owed to the government, but Aurangzeb issued orders that the state of Marwar including Jodhpur should be taken into **khalisa**. It was a part of the Mughal Empire though autonomous in internal matters. Disputed succession was one of the reasons for a state being taken into **khalisa**, something which was not unprecedented. Another reason was that many **zamindars** who had been subordinate to the Maharaja withheld revenues and created trouble. Jaswant Singh had given most of his villages in **patta** to **sardars** and was unable to recover the dues from them. He was therefore in debt to the state. Some of his **parganas** were claimed by the neighbouring states. The inclusion of Jodhpur into **khalisa** was accompanied by the grant of **parganas** of Sojat and Jaitaran for the maintenance of Jaswant Singh's family. However, Rani Hadi was not prepared to surrender Jodhpur although she had no objection to the rest of Mewar being taken into **khalisa**. She wanted to postpone the issue and awaited the birth of Jaswant Singh's child hoping that it would be a male child. Rani Hadi was supported by the Rathors and Rana Raj Singh of Mewar. Aurangzeb offered to transform the **pattas** of Jaswant Singh's followers into Imperial **pattas** in order to reduce their anxiety that they would be dislodged if Jodhpur was brought under **khalisa**. Rani Hadi refused to surrender Jodhpur. Aurangzeb decided to strike a blow. Marwar was subdued and Mughal officers including **qazis** and **muhtasibs**

(public censors) were posted at Jodhpur. However, the fort was retained by Rani Hadi. Meanwhile, two posthumous sons were born to the Ranis of Jaswant Singh. The claims of the sons were backed by Rao Anup Singh, the ruler of Bikaner and Khan Jahar, the Imperial **bakhshi**. Finally, Aurangzeb bestowed the **gaddi** of Marwar on Indra Singh for a **peshkash** of 36 lakhs of rupees. Earlier Rani Hadi had made a secret offer that Rathors would destroy all the temples in Marwar if the **tika** was granted to a son of Jaswant Singh. The Rani had wanted to postpone the decision in favour of Indra Singh. She had made this offer at the behest of Tahir Khan the **faujdar** of Jodhpur. This amazing offer was rejected by Aurangzeb. It shows that Aurangzeb's actions such as deputing officials and stone-cutters to demolish temples in Marwar and his decision to reimpose **jiziya** were being misconstrued by Rajputs and his officials. Ultimately, the Rani suggested that Jodhpur might remain under **Khalisa** rather than being given to Indra Singh.

If Aurangzeb had wanted to fulfill the objective of forcible conversion of the Hindus, he would have kept Marwar under **khalisa**. He could also have administered it through an imperial nominee till the sons of Jaswant Singh came of age. However, the Rajputs feared that Indra Singh's accession would establish an unhealthy precedent that the claims of a direct descendant of the Raja would not be considered by the Mughal Emperor arbitrarily. The destruction of temples in Marwar at Aurangzeb's behest also caused a great deal of anxiety among the Rajputs.

The two minor sons of Jaswant Singh were brought to Delhi and their claims were backed by **mir bakhshi**, etc. Aurangzeb had decided to partition the kingdom to satisfy both Indra Singh and Ajit Singh (the son of Jaswant Singh). **Tika** was to be given to Indra Singh, while Sojat and Jaitran were to be held by Ajit Singh. The division of the state was meant to weaken Jodhpur which was a part of the policy of Aurangzeb towards the Rajputs—a policy of restraint in promoting the Rajputs. All this led to an uprising of the Rathors against the Mughals. Aurangzeb converted one child of Jaswant Singh at Agra to Islam to forfeit his claim to the **gaddi**. He now also did not accept the other child of Jaswant Singh as the genuine heir. Finally, Jodhpur submitted to Aurangzeb. Durga Das escaped with the child of Jaswant Singh to Mewar.

### 11.4.3 Bikaner

The ruling family of Bikaner is of the same lineage as the Rathor ruling family of Jodhpur. Rao Bika (1472-1504) disassociated himself from the Jodhpur family and came to the region of the Thar desert and established the principality of Bikaner known after his name. He and his descendants subdued the local Jat chieftains and brought them under their hegemony. Jaitsi (1526-1542) seems to have joined the service of Emperor Humayun. But when Rao Maldeo of Jodhpur emerged as a powerful chieftain he brought Jaitsi under his authority. Jaitsi's son and successor Kalyan Mal joined Sher Shah's service and extended the limits of his dominion by getting the assignments of many parganas from Sher Shah.

When Akbar's regent Bairam Khan revolted in 1560-61, he sought shelter in Bikaner. After this event, Raja Bhagwant Das Kachhawa, who was related to Kalyan Mal, brought the latter to join Akbar's service in 1570. A Rathor princess of Bikaner was also married to Akbar. Rao Kalyan Mal and his son Rai Singh were given the **mansab** of 2000 **zat** and 4000 **zat** respectively. Rai Singh's son Dalpat was also granted the **mansab** of 500 **zat**.

Rao Rai Singh along with his son Dalpat rendered military service in the Mughal campaigns in different parts of the Empire. They participated in the campaigns of Sind, Punjab, Bengal and subdued the chieftains of Sirohi and Abu.

The bond between Rao Rai Singh and the Mughal ruling family was further strengthened by the marriage of the daughter of the Rao with Prince Salim. The Rao was appointed the **subadar** of **suba** Lahore in 1586-87. The social status of Rao was enhanced when Akbar conferred the title of **raja** on him.

Jahangir, after his accession in 1605, promoted Rao Rai Singh to the **mansab** of 5000, **zat** and appointed the Raja to guard the **harem** while he himself decided to chase the rebel Prince Khurram. Rai Singh neglected his duty and went to Bikaner.

He was later on pardoned by Jahangir due to the intervention of Amir ul Umra Sharif Khan. After his death in 1612, his son Dalpat succeeded him. Rai Singh, due to his love for the mother of his younger son Sur Singh, had chosen him as his successor. But when it was reported to Jahangir, he overruled Rai Singh's choice and personally gave **tika** to Dalpat. By this action he made it clear that the power of granting succession rested with the central power only, i.e., the Mughal Emperor. Later on, Dalpat rebelled against the Emperor and Sur Singh, who helped to arrest Dalpat, was installed as the ruler of Bikaner. Sur Singh by rendering meritorious services had risen to the status of 3000 **zat** and 2000 **Sawar** during Jahangir's reign. Shah Jahan, after assuming power, promoted the Rao to the status of 4000 **zat** and 3000 **sawar**. The Rao participated in many campaigns. After his death in 1630-31, his son Karan was granted the **gaddi** with the title of **rao** and a **mansab** of 2000 **zat** and 1000 **sawar**. Satar Sal, another son of Sur Singh, was given the **mansab** of 500 **zat** and 200 **sawar**. Rao Karan served in Deccan and played a significant role in subduing many **zamindars** of the region. In the war of succession, the Rao decided to remain neutral and went to Bikaner instead of siding with either of the contending Princes for the Mughal throne. Aurangzeb, after his accession, forced the Rao to rejoin his service. He was given the **mansab** of 3000 **zat** and 2000 **sawar** and deputed to Deccan. In the campaign against the **zamindar** of Chanda, he played a dubious role which cost him his position. His son Anup Singh with the **mansab** of 2500 **zat** and 2000 **sawar** was given Bikaner. The deposed Rao settled in Aurangabad where he died in 1666-67. Anup Singh's services in Deccan earned him the title of **raja**. He fought against the Marathas and was appointed the **qila' dar** of Nusratabad. After his death in 1699, his son Sarup Singh was given the **tika** with a **mansab** of 1000 **zat** and 500 **sawar**.

#### 11.4.4 Mewar

Mewar was one of the largest Rajput states in Rajasthan. It had three strong forts, i.e., Chittor, Kumbhalmer and Mandal. It was ruled by the Sisodia chiefs. The trade-route from Agra to Gujarat passed through the Sisodia territory; therefore, it had great importance for the Mughal Emperor. The Sisodia chieftains had brought many local chieftains under their hegemony. The contest of Rana Sanga with Babur has already been discussed. Mewar's defeat attracted external invasions. Bahadur Shah of Gujarat attacked Mewar and succeeded in forcing the Rana to accept his suzerainty.

Rana Udai Singh, the successor of Rana Vikramjit, gave shelter to Baz Bahadur, the ruler of Malwa. Akbar led an expedition against Chittor in 1567 and captured it. Rana Pratap succeeded Udai Singh. He refused to pay personal homage to Akbar but sent his son Amar Singh along with **peshkash** to the court. The result was the battle of Haldighati which proved ruinous for the Rajputs. Mewar had always defied Mughal authority due to its size, terrain and geographical location. Under Akbar no favours were given to Mewar. In 1614, Prince Khurram led an expedition and forced Rana Amar Singh to submit. The Rana sent his son Kunwar Karan to the court where he was treated favourably. He was given the status of a **mansabdar** of **panj hazari** (5000 **zat**). However, the treaty which was contracted between the Rana and the Mughals, granted many privileges to the Rana. It was decided that the Rana would not render military service to the Mughals in person, but he would depute a person with only 1500 troopers. It was also decided that the Rana would not get the fort of Chittor repaired. The Rana enjoyed the status of 5000 **zat** in the Mughal **mansab** hierarchy. In 1619, when Rana Amar Singh died, Kunwar Karan succeeded him with the title of **rana** and the **mansab** of 5000 **zat**. After his death in 1628, his son Jagat Singh received the **mansab** of 5000 **zat** and 5000 **sawar** from Emperor Shah Jahan.

In 1654, in violation of the treaty of 1614, when Jagat Singh began to repair the fort, Shah Jahan deputed Sadullah Khan in 1656 to take action against the Rana. To punish the Rana for the violation of the treaty, some **parganas** were sequestered and annexed to the imperial **Khalisa**. Rana Jagat Singh's successor Rana Raj Singh approached prince Dara Shukoh, and, through his intervention the Rana saved his dominion from large scale devastation by Sadullah Khan. However, the Rana continued to depute a person with a fixed number of troopers for rendering military service to the Mughal Emperor.

In the war of succession, Rana Raj Singh remained a silent spectator but, when the decisive battle of Deorai near Ajmer was imminent, both Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb became keen to seek help from the Rana. Dara Shukoh had taken position at Deorai hill which was very important strategically. If Jaswant Singh and Rana Raj Singh had both joined Dara it would have been disastrous for Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb, visualising all these aspects, hastened to promise the Rana that he would restore him to the honour enjoyed by Rana Sangram Singh. But he did not keep his promise. However, Aurangzeb raised him to the mansab of 6000 zat and 6000 sawar. The parganas confiscated from the Rana were restored to him. The territories of Dungarpur, Banswara and Deolia whose chieftains had fought against Aurangzeb were also assigned as *ghair amali jagir* to the Rana. In addition, two *kror dams* were granted in *inam* (revenue free land grants) to him. Rana's interest in Mewar succession dispute was mainly to reassert the importance of Mewar in Rajput politics. When Rana Jai Singh became the ruler he was forced to cede the parganas of Mandal, Bidur, etc in lieu of *jiziya* and also not to support the Rathors. But the unity between the Sisodias and Rathors had already suffered. Rana Jai Singh did not wholeheartedly support Ajit Singh's succession to the gaddi of Marwar due to secret attempts made by the Rathors to sequester territories in Mewar. However, in 1696, the Rana of Mewar married his niece to Ajit Singh. Finally *tika* was given to Ajit Singh, though Jodhpur was retained by Aurangzeb.

#### 11.4.5 Jaisalmer

In the Western Thar desert of Rajasthan, there were many Bhati chieftains independent of each other. Muhta Nainsi, a compiler of the *Khyat* in the second half of seventeenth century, has referred to many of them ruling over Pugal, Bikanpur, Derawar, Motasar, Hapasara and Jaisalmer. They did not have a centralized political organisation but Jaisalmer was the largest and the most powerful Bhati state among these. Rao Loon Karan (1528-50) subdued the chieftain of Derawar and included it in his territory. Rawal Har Raj of Jaisalmer, who was related to the Kachhawaha family by matrimonial ties was brought by Bhagwant Das to join Emperor Akbar's service in 1570. His acceptance of Mughal suzerainty was accompanied by the marriage of his daughter to the Emperor. Further, this bond was strengthened by giving Har Raj's son Rawal Bhim's daughter in marriage to Prince Salim. She was given the title of *malika i Jahan*. Rawal Bhim (1578-1614) rendered military service to the Mughals in Sind and was given the mansab of 3000 zat by the end of Akbar's reign.

In the absence of any male issue, Jahangir after Rawal Bhim's death (related to the Kachhawaha family) in 1614, granted succession to his younger brother Kalyan. He got the mansab of 2000 zat and 1000 sawar and the hereditary title of *rawal*. After his death in 1647, his son Manohar Das became the Rawal of Jaisalmer. The line of succession changed when Manohar Das died in 1649. Ram Chand, being the heir-apparent, became the ruler of Jaisalmer, but Shah Jahan overruled his succession and gave *tika* to Sabal Singh who was from the lineage of Rawal Maldeo (1550-1561), the ruler of Jaisalmer. Shah Jahan seems to have intervened in succession because of the internecine feuds among the Bhatias in Jaisalmer. Sabal Singh was the son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh's sister and had rendered meritorious service in Peshawar where he protected successfully the imperial treasury from the recalcitrant Afghans.

Shah Jahan due to all these considerations decided to grant *tika* to Sabal Singh. The Emperor asked Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur to instal Sabal Singh on the gaddi Jaisalmer. After Sabal Singh's death, his son Amar Singh became the Rawal in 1659. Amar Singh's energies were spent mostly in fighting with the local Rajput refractories and the neighbouring Rathor chieftain Anup Singh of Bikaner. Aurangzeb assigned Pokharan, Phalaudi and Malani parganas in jagir to Amar Singh, but after his death in 1701 his jagir was seized by his neighbours—the Rathors and Daud Khan Afghan of Shikarpur.

#### 11.4.6 Bundi and Kota

The south-eastern region of Rajasthan was known as Hadauti also. The Rajputs who governed the region are known as Hadas. Before the second half of the 16th century, the Hadas were not in prominence. They were subordinate to the Rana of



Mewar. Rao Surjan Hada, who was the incharge of the impregnable fort of Ranthambor on behalf of the Rana of Mewar, submitted to Akbar in 1561-62. The Rao and his sons Duda and Bhoj joined the Imperial service and they served the Mughals in Bihar, Orissa and Deccan. Rao Surjan and Bhoj held the mansabs of 2000 zat and 900 zat respectively.

Rao Surjan had divided his dominion between his sons Duda and Bhoj. When the eldest son Duda rebelled against his father, Bundi was given to the younger son Bhoj. The Hada chieftains continued to render military service to the Mughal Emperor. Ratan, Hada had become a favourite of Jahangir and he played an important role in suppressing Prince Khurram's revolt in Burhanpur. He got the mansab of 5000 zat and 5000 sawar, and the titles of Sarbuland Ray and Ram Rai. The latter title was considered the highest honour in Deccan. His son Madho Singh and brother Hriday Narain were also given mansabs.

Shah Jahan, after his accession, decided to curb the power of the Hada chieftains of Bundi. In 1631, after Rao Ratan's death, the territory of Bundi was divided into two parts—Bundi and Kota. The Emperor gave *tilka* of Bundi to Satrsal who was the heir apparent of Bundi, and Kota was given to Ratan's son Madho Singh. Since then, Bundi and Kota became separate independent states. The Hada chieftains of Bundi and Kota continued to serve the Mughals in their military campaigns. Rao Satrasal fought on the imperial side against Aurangzeb in the war of succession and was killed in the battle of Samugarh. When the Mughal central authority weakened, the chieftains of Kota and Bundi fought with each other for domination over the region.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) What were the basic features of Babur and Humayun's policy towards the Rajputs?

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2) Distinguish the three phases in Akbar's Rajput policy.

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## 11.5 THE RAJPUT STATES IN CENTRAL INDIA

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The important Rajput states in central India were Dhandera, Rewa and Orcha.

**Dhandera**

It was a Rajput principality in the suba of Malwa. The chieftains of chandera were connected to the Bundelas and Panwars.

**Orcha**

A large principality in central India known as Orcha was in the possession of the Bundela Rajputs. It was situated on a strategically important route linking the North and Deccan. The Mughals taking advantage of the internal dissensions among the Bundelas curtailed their power by dividing their territory among different families.

### Bandhogarh or Rewa

The chieftains of Bandhogarh are known as Baghelas. Their territory was large and was a part of Allahabad suba.

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## 11.6 OTHER RAJPUT STATES

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Certain lesser important Rajput states were the hill Rajputs states and Baglana and Idar.

### 11.6.1 Baglana and Idar

The chieftains of Baglana claimed their descent from the Rathors of Qannauj. According to a tradition, three Rathor chieftains came from Qannauj to Pali in Rajasthan and established three independent states in Jodhpur, Baglana and Idar. The Rathor chieftains of Baglana founded their states after dispossessing the Bhils. The chieftain of Baglana was called Birji. The territory of Baglana lay between Gujarat and Deccan and was a very rich territory. It had seven strong forts including Salher and Malher. Baglana remained subordinate to either of the two states of Khandesh or Gujarat. Like Baglana, the Rathor chieftains of Idar, too, owed allegiance either to Gujarat or Mewar.

### 11.6.2 The Hill Rajput States

There were a number of hill Rajput states in North western India. Some of them emerged powerful in the 16th century. Since these states were remotely situated in hilly, inaccessible tracts, it was not easy for the centre to keep them under control. The chieftains of Jammu, Nagarkot (Kangra) Mau-Nurpur, Gular (a branch of Kangra family), Chamba and Kumaon were subdued by Akbar, but intermittently they used to defy Mughal authority. They were well versed in fighting in hill regions and the Mughals installed them in the North-Western frontier. The Mughals interfered in the succession issue in these states. They contracted marriage alliances with the hill states, granted *mansabs* to the hill chieftains and sequestered their territories. Of the hill states, only Kuman succeeded in establishing a centralised administrative system.

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## 11.7 MUGHAL-RAJPUT RELATIONS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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Mughal-Rajput relations in the 16th century developed according to the political requirement of the two main ruling elites in North India—the Mughals and Rajputs. In the 17th century however it suffered a setback against the backdrop of steady expansion of the Empire, internal conflicts among the Rajputs and proclamation of the principle of regional autonomy by different sections.

### Jahangir and Shah Jahan

During the reign of these rulers the alliance with the Rajputs established by Akbar was strengthened despite certain hurdles. The most creditable achievement of Jahangir was the cessation of war with Mewar. He did not press upon personal submission of the Rana and accepted the homage paid by his son. To Rana were restored all those territories which had been taken from him either in Akbar's time or Jahangir's time. Rana's son was also favoured with a *mansab* and jagir. Jahangir established the tradition that Rana's son or brother should serve the Emperor. Matrimonial relations with Mughals were not forced upon the Rana. The Chittor fort was a powerful bastion which had consistently disregarded Mughal power and Jahangir did not want it to be repaired to its former shape. Jahangir carried forward Akbar's policy of establishing matrimonial relations with the Rajput *rajas*. However, after Mewar's submission these marriages took place less frequently. Most of them took place while Mewar was opposing the Mughals. Once Mewar had been humbled, the alliance with the Rajputs had become stable. Thus, to some extent,

these marriages served only a fixed political aim. Marriages did bring about amicable relations between Mughals and Rajputs. They were mostly contracted in anticipation of imminent contest for power.

During Jahangir's reign the rulers of four leading states of Rajputana—Mewar, Marwar, Amber and Bikaner—held the **mansab** of 5000 **zat** or above. The Kachchawahas lost their dominant position in the nobility. The rulers of the Rajput states now got higher **mansabs** in comparison to Akbar's time. During the first decade of Jahangir's reign there was a sharp fall in the total **mansab** granted to the Rajputs following Khusrau's rebellion. An analysis of the **mansab** and offices conferred during Jahangir's reign shows that they were type-cast on the basis of ethnic origin, caste, etc. The Rajputs were mainly employed as **qila' dars** of forts or as **faujdar**. But this type casting was not inflexible nor rested on communal considerations as Jahangir was liberal in matters pertaining to religion.

During Shah Jahan's reign, they were given important commands and were granted high **mansabs**. This reflects that he trusted the Rajputs and assigned them important duties. Shah Jahan, however, discontinued Jahangir's policy of not granting **subadari** to the Rajput **rajās** of leading houses. However, these assignments were few and infrequent. The Rajputs continued to be given posts such as **qila' dar** and **faujdar**. The differentiation between civil and military was still made on the basis of caste and ethnic origins. During Jahangir's and Shah Jahan's time, the Rajputs continued to be allies but their role in administration was negligible.

Two conflicts against Bundelas and Mewar took place during Shah Jahan's reign and both occurred due to conflicting interpretations of concept of paramountcy and suzerainty. As suzerain power, the Rajputs indulged in military raids for gaining territory at the cost of their neighbours and for extorting money from those who were theoretically subordinate to them but could rebel against them whenever the opportunity arose.

The Mughals who held hegemonic power wanted to control these conflicts out of self-interest and because the subordinate chieftains had direct relations with the Mughals to protect themselves and seek Mughal help whenever necessary. Thus, the class allies—Rajputs and Mughals—had common interests as far as collection of land revenue and maintenance of law and order were concerned, but there were differences as far as rights and privileges were concerned. They could be sorted out by a process of give and take or could lead to tensions. The Mughals tried to make it clear that no subordinate **raja** could extend his territory without the consent of the Mughal Emperor. If he was prepared to part with the gains of conquest, he could be granted permission. This reflects the class nature of the struggle between Mughals and Rajputs.

Conflict with Mewar should be examined in the light of the concept of Mughal paramountcy. Certain subordinate principalities of Mewar had asserted their independence during Akbar's time. But, in 1615, overlordship of Mewar over these states territories was recognised. Later, these subordinate chieftains again asserted their independence and tried to expand into neighbouring areas. They were supported by the Mughals. Conflict for control over territories took place between the Mughals and Mewar. Refortification of Chittor by the Rana was only a pretext for war with Chittor. Shah Jahan destroyed the fort and sequestered many **parganas** in Chittor.

### Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb's policy towards the Rajputs from 1680's onwards caused worry both to the Rajputs as well as to a section of the Mughal nobility. This is evident from the Rajput-Mughal nobles' complicity in the rebellion of Prince Akbar. The rulers of Mewar and Marwar were dissatisfied with Aurangzeb's policy and they wanted restoration of territories sequestered by Aurangzeb. A section at the Mughal court, e.g., Prince Azam considered Aurangzeb's Rajput policy faulty and attempted to conspire with the Rana of Mewar expecting his help in the war of succession. In the second half of the 17th century Aurangzeb became lukewarm towards the Rajputs. Rajputs were not given important assignments. He interfered in matters relating to matrimonial alliances among the Rajputs. However, Aurangzeb's breach with Mewar and Marwar did not mean a breach with the Rajputs in general. The rulers of

Amber, Bikaner, Bundi and Kota continued to receive mansabs. But they were not accorded high ranks or positions in Aurangzeb's reign like during the reign of Akbar and his successors Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

It cannot be said that wars with Mewar and Marwar signalled the discontinuation of Akbar's policy of alliance with the Rajputs. In fact, the wars reflect the conflict between the policy of alliance with the Rajputs and the broader policy of winning over the local ruling elites, i.e. zamindars. We cannot say that Aurangzeb's orthodoxy solely shaped his Rajput policy. There were other factors at work. As the Mughal Empire got consolidated in the north, the next step was to extend its boundaries southwards which meant alliance with local ruling elements, i.e., the Marathas. The Rajputs lost their prominent position in the Mughal system. The importance of the Marathas increased in the second half of the 17th century. Now the Rajputs needed the alliance with the Mughals.

The wars with Mewar and Marwar were a drain on the treasury but not a serious one and did not in any substantial way affect the overland trade to the Cambay sea-ports. However, Aurangzeb's Rajput policy reflected his incompetence to deal with issues effectively which affected the prestige of the Empire. It led to political and religious discord which demonstrated lack of political acumen. All this gave impetus to rebellions by the Mughal Princes in league with the Rajputs.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) Which were the important hill Rajput states during this period?

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- 2) What were the main tenets of Mughal policy towards the Rajputs in the 17th century?

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**11.8 LET US SUM UP**

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Mughal alliance with the Rajputs did create an atmosphere of interaction between Hindus and Muslims but it was limited in scope. It basically served the purpose of realpolitik for both the Rajputs and Mughals, but it did not succeed in extending the social base of the Empire which was the need of the times. Recourse to religion was by and large a measure of political expediency.

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**11.9 KEY WORDS**

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**Dam :** A Mughal Copper coin; 40 dams – 1 Mughal silver rupee.

**Ghair Amli Jagirs :** Jagirs granted to pesh kashi zamindars.

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## 11.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 11.2
- 2) See Section 11.3 and Sub-sec 11.3.1, 11.3.2 and 11.3.3

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-sec 11.6.2
- 2) See Section 11.7

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## SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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- 1) Satish Chandra, **Medieval India.**
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- 4) Radhey Shyam, **The Kingdom of Ahmednagar**
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- 6) S.N. Sen, **Rise and Fall of the Maratha Power**
- 7) G.S. Sardesai, **New History of the Marathas Vol. I**
- 3) J.F. Richards, **Mughal Administration in Golconda.**

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# UNIT 12 MUGHAL THEORY OF SOVEREIGNTY

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## Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 The Background
- 12.3 Nature of Central Asian Polity: Turco-Mongol Impact
  - 12.3.1 Influence of Turah
  - 12.3.2 Turco-Mongol Concept of Sovereignty
  - 12.3.3 Nature of Political Structure
  - 12.3.4 Custom of Succession
  - 12.3.5 Centre-State Relationship
  - 12.3.6 The Nobility
- 12.4 The Mughal Theory of State: Its Development
  - 12.4.1 Babur and Humayun
  - 12.4.2 Akbar
- 12.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.6 Key Words
- 12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit deals with the evolution and nature of the Mughal theory of sovereignty. No polity or state organisation could ever develop in isolation. The study of the present Unit would enable you to see the varied shades of influences on and aspects of Mughal sovereignty in India. After reading this Unit you would be able to learn about:

- the formative factors and the impact of Persian and Turco-Mongol tradition;
- the concept of sovereignty and the nature of political structure in the ancestral kingdom of the Mughals; and
- the Mughal concept of divine theory of kingship and various remnants of Turco-Mongol administration.

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Indian political thought as well as the Persian and Turco-Mongol traditions have attached much importance to the institution of sovereignty for preserving order and stability of society and for eradicating anarchy and lawlessness. Monarchy was considered to be the keystone of the medieval polity. Thus according to Abul Fazl: "If royalty did not exist, the storm of strife would never subside, nor selfish ambition disappear. Mankind being under the burden of lawlessness and lust would sink into the pit of destruction ..." The nature of the state and complexion of administrative structure of an Empire were determined largely by the theory of sovereignty and the policies propounded and pursued by the king himself. A study of the Central Asian theory of state and its various aspects is, therefore, essential for correct understanding of Mughal polity.

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## 12.2 THE BACKGROUND

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The Mughal rulers of India were not new to the art of governance: they possessed an experience of almost two centuries of dynastic rule in Central Asia. They brought with them a well-tryed and established principles of administration. The need to adapt in a new land had made them flexible enough to absorb the tradition of their surroundings.

The general administrative structure and the policies of the Mughals in India, therefore, appear to be a conglomeration of Indo-Islamic trends. The rich Central Asian heritage and Turco-Mongol legacy in the form of practices, institutions, loan words and terms do appear occasionally. The remnants of the Chingizi and Timuri polity are often noticed in the Mughal structure in India.

Babur took pride in calling himself a 'Turk' though he was a Turco-Mongol. Babur was related to Chingiz (on mother's side) and Timur (on father's side). Notwithstanding Babur's occasional outbursts against the Mongols, he held Chingiz Khan and his family in high esteem. Akbar's attitude towards his "ancestors" is appropriately reflected in the comments of Abul Fazl who called Chingiz a "great man". By thus elevating and glorifying the Mongols, the Mughals in India were adding prestige to their own dynasty. Extending their hereditary claims over the Indian territories by virtue of having the blood of Chingiz and Timur in their veins was, therefore, logical and expedient. Babur's dynasty in India was variously called 'Chaghatai', 'Mughal' and 'Qarawanah', disregarding the genealogical differences and their relationship to Chingiz through females. The significance of this relationship was not only fully realized but was equally utilized and emphasized by the Mughal rulers and their court chroniclers in biographies, historical accounts, royal letters and other documents. This emphasis on kinship between the families of Chingiz and Timur brings to the surface the undercurrents of Mughal anxiety to claim a close relationship and quality with the ruling family of Chingiz Khan on the basis of their genealogy, whether real or fictitious. To a great extent they preserved their rich legacy even while ruling over in India — an alien and somewhat different region. There are a number of terms and institutions which are similar in nomenclature though different in connotation. A thorough adaptation of Central Asian terms and institutions in accordance with the needs or circumstances and the surroundings is also noticed.

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## 12.3 NATURE OF CENTRAL ASIAN POLITY: TURCO-MONGOL IMPACT

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As we have already read, the Central Asian polity was adopted by the Mughals in many ways, bearing Turkish and Mongol traits. But controversy exists about the magnitude of Turkish and Mongol influences. Some scholars hold that Mongol traditions were predominant, while others suggest that Turkish influence was so strong that the Mongol system had really been converted into what can only be designated as Turco-Mongol.

When Chingiz came to Central Asia, his army mainly comprised Turks, albeit with only a nucleus of Mongol. It is supported by several sources that the prescribed norms and Mughal customs and practices were often being followed "in the fashion of Chingiz Khan". The Empire of Timur was also a "unique combination of Turco-Mongolian political and military system". The Barlas tribe to which Timur himself belonged was actually a Turco-Mongol tribe.

### 12.3.1 Influence of Turah

Besides having Turkish traditions, the Central Asian administration was considerably influenced by the turah, that is the laws formulated by Chingiz after his ascendancy (other terms were yasa, yusun, yasaq). The turah did not contain any religious element and dealt mainly with political principles and the organisation of government and civil and military administration. The turah was considered to be an immutable code.

Akbar was proud of Central Asian connections and traditions. A fine blend of Central Asian and Indian traditions with a veneer of Perso-Islamic principles is, therefore, noticed in various spheres of Mughal politics and administration under Akbar. The turah figures in Jahangir's autobiography and flickers through some of his measures. The references to turah, however, start fading and dwindle gradually in the reign of Shah Jahan and is finally engulfed by the "religious revivalism" during the reign of Aurangzeb. Nevertheless, the principles of turah and the Chaghatai traditions had limited utility in Indian context. A survey of the Mughal sources shows that the emphasis on turah was motivated by a real politik of the Mughal Emperors who wanted to highlight their links with the two former conquerors of India and to the great Empire builders namely Chingiz and Timur. It may, however, be pointed out that the

turah was preserved and at best its traditions continued to linger in the Mughal Empire mainly in the sphere of the laws of ceremonies and etiquettes. Nevertheless, the occasional references to the 'Chaghatai traditions' found in early Mughal sources are conspicuously missing in the later period.

### 12.3.2 Turco-Mongol Concept of Sovereignty

Although it is said that Chingiz had borrowed his divine theory of sovereignty from the Uighlurs, the Mongols themselves seem to believe in absolute power of the **Khan** which is evident from the following words of a Mongol **Khan**: "In the sky there can only be one sun or one moon; how can there be two masters on earth". Nonetheless, division of the Empire among the ruler's sons for facilitating administration with all its rigours and satiating the desires of governance among princes was the cardinal principle of Mongol concept of sovereignty. But Timur followed the concept of absolute sovereignty who pronounced that "the whole expanse of the inhabited part of the world is not worthy of two kings: since God is one, therefore, the vicegerent of God on earth should also be one." Babur also confirms that "partnership in rule is a thing unheard of".

Despite these assertions, a controversy has existed among the historians about the tradition of absolute monarchy entertained by Timur who had accepted the nominal overlordship of a descendant of Chingiz Khan. Timur himself never used any title higher than **amir**. Though Timur's successor Shahrukh assumed the title **Padshah** and **Sultan-ul Azam**, the idea of the nominal overlordship of the Khan remained alive down to the time of Abu Saeed Mirza. However, the existence of puppet Khans was a political necessity for Timur. Timur did not belong to the royal family of Chingiz and in the given situation "only men of the tribe of Chingiz could claim the title Khan". Thus, Timur's right to accession was likely to be challenged by the Mongols.

These **Khans** were kept confined to a particular locality and the only royal prerogative enjoyed by them was the **manshurs** (orders) and certain coins of Timur carried the names of these "prisoners". Nevertheless, Timur continued to maintain his supremacy over the **Khans**. No sooner had he acquired necessary power and secured enough support from the Chaghatai nobles than he proclaimed himself sovereign in 1370 with the title of **sahib-i qiran** (a title given to a ruler who had ruled for forty years). The coronation ceremony was held with all royal grandeur for Timur alone. Timur never "rendered honours to the **Khans** in the presence of the troops and in solemn surroundings. Honours due to the monarch were always personally received by Timur". Being a firm believer in absolutism, Timur never attached undue importance to the consultative assembly (**qurultai**). Besides, he considered himself to be the temporal as well as spiritual leader. Concept of sovereignty was stretched by him to its logical end. He announced that he "received direct revelations from the Almighty", thus giving divine sanctions to his enterprise. Thus, the practice of installing puppet **Khans** was merely a political game which had been played by Timur and his successors to mobilize the support of Mongol forces and to use them finally to establish their own power and to legitimize their rule over a territory which was actually usurped by them from the Mongols. At any rate, after the death of Mahmud in A.D. 1402, Timur did not care to appoint any other **Khan**.

#### Check Your Progress 1

1) Tick mark (x/√) the correct statements:

- i) Babur was related to Chingiz (from his father's side) and Timur (from his mother's side).
- ii) There was a significant impact of Turco-Mongol concepts of sovereignty over the Mughal theory of State.
- iii) The Mughals put their legal claim on Timur's legacy of India.
- iv) Abul Fazl comments that if royalty subsides, selfish ambition disappear.

2) Write a short note on turah.

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3) Discuss the Turco-Mongol Concept of sovereignty.

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### 12.3.3 Nature of Political Structure

Was the political structure of the Timuri rulers of Central Asia oriented towards centralisation? Some scholars hold that there were trends towards greater centralisation. But this view has been contended by others. The latter argue that the tribal character of the Mongol polity did not permit the rise of an absolutism comparable to Turkish monarchy. Chingiz Khan's Empire belonged not to the ruler but to the ruling family. But others point out that even when the Timuri state declined and disintegrated, the traditions of despotic and absolute monarchy continued. It is fair to conclude, then, that Timuri polity was one of absolutism and that minor deviations or exceptions cannot fundamentally modify this basic fact.

### 12.3.4 Custom of Succession

While Chingiz Khan had nominated his own successor, he had, however, emphasized that anyone from amongst the sons and grandsons of the kings could succeed him provided that such a person was worthy of this office. This system of nomination by the Khan on the basis of merit seems to have continued upto the Timuris. The nomination of the Khan was not always respected, but the worth of a person always enabled him to contrive his own enthronement. As 'worth' happened to be the main criterion for accession, aspirations of many energetic and enterprising princes were excited. Consequently, civil wars, fratricide and rebellions became a regular phenomenon in Central Asia and in Mughal India as well. In accordance with the Old Turco-Mongol tradition, kingship was not reserved for the sons of the king only. With the extension of this opportunity to the grandsons and uncles of the king (Khan), the number of aspirants became very large. Either worth or even popular support could decide the issue of succession. In all three situations (i.e. nomination, contrivance and selection), the question of succession had to be formally ratified by a **qurultai** (assembly of princes and nobles) which symbolized an assurance of submission by all the notables.

### 12.3.5 Centre-State Relationship

The king was the pivot of administration. The **khutba** was read and the coins were struck in the name of the king throughout the Empire. The provincial rulers were appointed by the king. They were required to act in accordance with the regulations and orders of the king and owed their status to the sweet will of the ruler. The provincial rulership and the land grants served as sources of income to the members of the royal family. Nevertheless, the final authority rested with the king. The provincial rulers were not permitted to interfere in the collection of the king's share of revenue. For these and for other administrative purposes, special deputies were appointed by the Khan in each **khanate**. The failure of a provincial ruler (Sultan) to comply with the orders of the Khan or to fulfil his military or financial obligation at a certain time would have disastrous consequences for him. While they were allowed to have diplomatic relations with external powers, certain major decisions like the waging of war or the signing of treaty were taken by the king personally. The king was authorised to intervene in interstate feuds and even to transfer or depose an unruly Sultan.

it seems that division was necessary to facilitate the administration of a vast Empire and also to satisfy the ambitions of rulership amongst the princes. From all this, it can hardly be deduced that the king in the Chingizi or Timuri Empire was simply one from amongst the other Sultans.

### 12.3.6 The Nobility

The nobility being the creation of the king himself was supposed to be the main source of his strength. At the time of the accession of a new Khan, the nobility had to take an oath for remaining loyal and subservient to the king. The examples of a number of vicious and unscrupulous nobles of the later Timuris (in the last quarter of the Timuri rule in Central Asia) present a somewhat shocking picture of the Timuri nobles. These should not lead one to conclude that there were certain inherent weaknesses in the system itself which encouraged this attitude amongst the nobles and ultimately hampered the development of Central authority. The Turco-Mongol political structure had been built in such a way that nobles remained subservient to the Khan, notwithstanding their conditional privileges. Nevertheless, some scholars are of the view that the prevalence of hereditary privileges among a large section of the nobility discouraged the growth of absolutism in the Mongol Empire. Although it cannot be denied that many rulers of Transoxiana from time to time assigned special status to their favourite amirs, and, some of these privileges were even hereditary, it is also a fact that such privileges were being enjoyed by the nobles only on a reciprocal basis. In case of any defiance, these privileges could always be withdrawn. Each new king could renew or withhold all kinds of privileges granted by his predecessors. The very fact that Chingiz had prescribed a clause in his code whereby the nobles enjoying special status could be forgiven only for nine offences itself shows that the king could exercise his absolute power over the nobles. There are number of examples where the nobles had a high standing and were enjoying hereditary privileges also but were dismissed, executed, punished, fined or banished.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1) Briefly discuss the nature of centre-state relationship in Central Asia. Answer in 50 words.

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2) Assess the role of nobility in the Timuri Empire. Write your answer in 60 words.

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## 12.4 THE MUGHAL THEORY OF STATE: ITS DEVELOPMENT

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In the present section we will be dealing with the development of the Mughal concept of sovereignty under Babur and Humayun and how later under Akbar it reached at its climax.

### 12.4.1 Babur and Humayun

Some historians argue that the Timuri polity was influenced by the Turco-Mongol polity and it was absolutist in nature and essentially oriented towards highly centralised state structure. They consider it superior to the structure of the Afghan power which had reduced the Sultanate to a confederacy of tribes holdings different regions. But for others, it was only in the beginning that the Mongol influence was great; later, the Mongol polity started losing its centralizing and absolutist character.

Now let us examine the nature of Mughal polity. We have already discussed (Sec. 12.3) in detail the characteristic features of the Timuri and Mongol polity and found that Timuri polity was influenced by both Turki and Mongol structure. Let us see what legacy Babur had inherited when he came to India.

As for absolutist nature of Mughal polity, it is argued that the Timuri rulers down to Babur despite pressing circumstances did not think it appropriate to assume the title of **khaqaan** suggests that they conceded special status to the **Khans**. But it seems an oversimplification of a complicated problem. As stated above, division of the Empire among the sons of the ruler was the cardinal principle of Mongol theory of kingship. But Babur never approved this concept: when after the death of Husain Mirza, his two sons shared sovereign powers, he showed his surprise. Similarly he also rejected any idea of sharing sovereignty with his **begs** (nobles). But the Mughals at early stages do not seem to have totally alienated themselves from Mongol influences. The Mongol principle of the division of the Empire was put to test soon after the death of Babur. Humayun divided his Empire among his brothers but failed. In 1556 at the battle of Ushtargram, Akbar and one of the daughters of Kamran were put on the throne, but it was a short lived emergency measure. Nonetheless, Babur assumed the title of 'Padshah' — a Turkish title. Humayun's decision to shift sovereignty to a watercarrier for a day, who had saved his life, shows that the Mughals considered sovereignty as personal property of the 'Padshah'. Even the so-called hereditary privileges of the nobles got the sanction of the ruler. Such privileges had to be renewed by the new ruler. Therefore, it is not quite correct to infer that the prevalence of hereditary privileges among a large section of nobility discouraged the growth of absolutism in the early Turco-Mongol polity. Later, both Babur and Humayun are known to have respected the Chaghatai code of laws (**turah**) which was allergic to the concept of more than one ruler at one time.

### 12.4.2 Akbar

Abul Fazl says: "No dignity is higher in the eyes of God than royalty. Royalty is a remedy for the spirit of rebellion ...." Even the meaning of the word **Padshah** shows this for **pad** signifies stability and possession and **shah** means origin, Lord. A king is, therefore, the "origin of stability and possession". He adds: "Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun .... Modern language calls this light **farri izidi** (the divine light) and the tongue of antiquity called it **kiyan khwarah** (the sublime halo). It is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of anyone. Again many excellent qualities flow from the possession of this light, e.g., a paternal love towards the subjects, a large heart, trust in God, prayer and devotion, etc. At another place, Abul Fazl repeats that "The **shamsa** of the arch of royalty is a divine light, which God directly transfers to kings, without the assistance of men ...." The king was therefore deemed to be divinely appointed, divinely guided and divinely protected.

The theory of sovereignty propounded by Abul Fazl on behalf of Akbar and reflected in his **mahzar** and "**Ai'n-i rahnamuni**" seems to be as close to the Central Asian and Perso-Islamic concepts as to the Chingizi traditions of sovereignty. It is significant that the absolute traditions of sovereignty and conjunction of spiritual and temporal rulership was developed at many courts as a defence mechanism against undue encroachment upon king's authority by lesser mortals. The philosophy and the spirit of the concepts of **farri izidi**, **kiyan khwarah**, etc. were the same, that is, the intention was to guard against any direct or indirect share in king's authority. Alauddin Khalji had tried to abide by the "law of expediency", Akbar went ahead of him. By the **mahzar** (drafted by Shaikh Mubarak and his two sons), the Emperor was certified to be a just ruler (**Imam Adil**) and was as such assigned the rank of **mujtahid**, i.e. an "infallible authority"; nay, the position of **Imam Adil** was declared superior to that of a **mujtahid**. The "intellect of the just king" thus became the valuable source of legislation.

Abul Fazl elucidates that “when the time of reflection comes, and men shake off the prejudices of their education, the thread of the web of religious blindness break and the eye sees the glory of harmoniousness ... although some are enlightened many would observe silence from fear of fanatics who lust for blood, but look like men .... The people will naturally look to their king and expect him to be their spiritual leader as well, for a king possesses, independent of men, the ray of Divine wisdom, which banishes from his heart everything that is conflicting. A king will, therefore, sometimes observe the element of harmony in a multitude of things.... Now this is the case with the monarch of the present age. He now is the spiritual guide of the nation.”

### Check Your Progress 3

1) To what extent Turco-Mongol traditions were followed by Babur and Humayun?

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2) Comment on the theory of sovereignty propounded by Abul Fazl. Answer in 60 words.

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## 12.5 LET US SUM UP

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The Mughal perception of sovereignty primarily carried the impact of Turco-Mongol traditions that had evolved in Central Asia, especially since the *turah* of Chingiz Khan. The crucial question was the position and status of the ruler. Did he aspire for absolute authority? Was he prepared to allow others to share his authority and powers? The key to resolve these two queries is to be very clear about the difference between sharing of sovereignty on the one hand, and sharing of power on the other. From the foregoing account we can say that it was possible for others to exercise authority and enjoy power, but we must not fail to see the vital point that such authority and power were in fact delegated by the ruler to others (for example, princes being appointed as rulers or **Sultans** of different regions). This practice by no means could be interpreted as “sharing the sovereignty” which, for that matter, was totally a different thing. Stray and momentary incidents are not of much consequence. Thus, there was no question of the Turco-Mongol and the Mughal rulers to compromise on this fundamental principle of absolute monarchy: it would not accommodate another person with concurrent sovereignty.

Moreover, the divine element in the concept of sovereignty existed since early times. The usual formula in the Islamic culture-area in this respect was *zil-al Allah fil ‘arz* (“shadow of God on earth”) which Babur, too, had adopted. But Akbar went further: he changed the formula to *farri izidi*, that is, “light of God”. This makes an enormous difference: “shadow of God” is naturally inferior in perception to “light of God”. The latter links the monarch directly to God, rather he becomes a part of God. Thus, Akbar’s perception of sovereignty is the zenith that the Muslim mind could go. That was the

limit for a Muslim ruler: to cross that would have amounted to doing violence to the concept of Allah among the Muslims. Surely, no mortal could declare himself as God.

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## 12.6 KEY WORDS

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<b>Ain</b>	:	literally rules. Abul Fazl in his book <i>Ain-i Akbari</i> presents the rules of Akbar's Empire. These rules refer to imperial household, mansabdars, imperial army, food-stuffs, royal stable, prices, revenue system, etc.
<b>Ain-i-Rahnamuni</b>	:	<i>Ain</i> 77. In this section Abul Fazl mentions His Majesty as the spiritual guide of the people.
<b>Khutba</b>	:	a sermon recited in mosques on Fridays wherein the name of the ruler was included.
<b>Mahzar</b>	:	<i>lit.</i> a decree. Akbar issued the famous decree of mahzar in 1580 which was drafted by Shaikh Mubarak. This decree recognised the superior position of Sultan over the mujtahids (interpreter of law).
<b>Sahib-i qiran</b>	:	<i>lit.</i> a fortunate and invincible hero. A title of Timur. This title was given to a monarch who had ruled for forty years.
<b>Steppes</b>	:	a region north of China and east of lake Baikal. Mongols were the original inhabitants of the region.
<b>Uighlurs</b>	:	a Central Asian Tribe

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## 12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) i) x      ii) ✓      iii) ✓      iv) x
- 2) Read Sub-sec 12.3.1. Define turah and highlight its importance. Also discuss Mughal rulers' attitude towards it.
- 3) See Sub-sec. 12.3.2. Discuss the Turkish and Mongol concepts of sovereignty and to which extent Central Asian rulers were influenced by these traditions/concepts.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-sec. 12.3.5. Read the section carefully and analyse the Turk and the Mongol beliefs in the absolute power. Also discuss how Timur's limitations forced him to accept nominal overlordship of Khans.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 12.3.5

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Carefully read Sub-sec. 12.4.1. Analyse to what extent Babur and Humayun were influenced by Turkish and Mongol concepts of sovereignty. Also discuss the circumstances instrumental in influencing their actions.
- 2) Read Sub-sec. 12.4.2. Discuss Abul Fazl's concept of sovereignty. How and why Akbar brought changes in the existing regulations. Discuss its impact. To what extent it helped the Mughals in assuming superior position than the ulama/ mujtahid?

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## UNIT 13 MUGHAL RULING CLASS

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### Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 The Ruling Class Under Babur and Humayun
- 13.3 Development Under Akbar
- 13.4 Composition of the Mughal Ruling Class
  - 13.4.1 Racial and Religious Groups
  - 13.4.2 The Foreign Elements — Turanis and Iranis
  - 13.4.3 The Afghans
  - 13.4.4 Indian Muslims
  - 13.4.5 Rajputs and Other Hindus
  - 13.4.6 Marathas and Other Deccanis
- 13.5 Organisation of the Ruling Class
- 13.6 Distribution of Revenue Resources Among the Ruling Class
- 13.7 Life Style of the Ruling Class
- 13.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 13.0 OBJECTIVES

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In Unit 12, we have discussed the formation and working of the Mughal Theory of state. This unit will discuss important features of the structure and working of the Mughal ruling class down to Aurangzeb's period. After reading this unit you will

- know about the origins and development of the ruling class;
- understand the racial composition of the ruling class;
- learn about its organisation;
- have some idea about the share of the ruling class in the revenue resources of the empire; and
- be acquainted with the life style of the ruling class.

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### 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Mughal ruling class was multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-regional. Theoretically it was the creation of the Emperor. The Mughal ruling class or the nobility as it is commonly designated, comprised both civil bureaucrats as well as military commanders. They all held **mansab** and received their salary either in cash 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.

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### 13.2 THE RULING CLASS UNDER BABUR AND HUMAYUN

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The ruling class 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 India. 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 Hindustan, 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 ruling class in its formative stage under Babur and Humayun was not a disciplined and effective organisation 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.

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### 13.3 DEVELOPMENT UNDER AKBAR

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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 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 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 Rajputs 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.

## 13.4 COMPOSITION OF THE MUGHAL RULING CLASS

After its first phase of development during the reign of Babur and Humayun and the early years of Akbar, the Mughal ruling class 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. 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 15).

Nobles and high officers of other states were also taken into the Mughal ruling class 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 ruling class 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.

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 Abul Mulk Tuni Fazil Khan** in Aurangzeb's period are some of the noteworthy examples of this class.

### 13.4.1 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), Shia's (including many Iranis) and Hindus (Rajputs) — and to prevent sectarian differences among them from interfering with the loyalty to the throne.

### 13.4.2 The Foreign Elements — Turanis and Iranis

The foreign elements in the Mughal ruling class comprised largely the Turanis (or the Central Asians) and Iranis (also called Khurasanis and Iraqis). 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 **Tarvernier**, occupied the highest posts in the Mughal Empire.



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.

### 13.4.3 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.

### 13.4.4 Indian Muslims

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 Mughal 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.

### 13.4.5 Rajputs and Other Hindus

As has been discussed above, Rajputs and other Hindu nobles were inducted in the Mughal ruling class 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 Rajputs 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 mansabdars 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:

Table 1

	Akbar (1595)	Shah Jahan (1628-58)	Aurangzeb (1658-78) (1679-1707)	
A. Total mansabdars	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.

### 13.4.6 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 ruling class. 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. (See Table 1) 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, Haiderbadis and Marathas) were recruited on a large scale. 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 1

- Trace the evolution of Mughal ruling class spanning Babur, Humayun and Akbar's reigns.

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- Enumerate the various groups which comprised the Mughal ruling class. What was their position in the Mughal nobility?

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### 13.5 ORGANISATION OF THE RULING CLASS

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The Mughal ruling class was organised 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 contingents 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 15).

The Mughal mansabdar received his pay as determined by their 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 15).

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### 13.6 DISTRIBUTION OF REVENUE RESOURCES AMONG THE RULING CLASS

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Shireen Moosvi have 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 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 ruling class. 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.

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## 13.7 LIFE STYLE OF THE RULING CLASS

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With huge amounts 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. Here we would like to give you a brief idea about the nobles building activities.

From Shaikh Farid Bhakkari's biographical work *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin* (1642), it appears that Mughal officers and nobles were fond of constructing attractive and imposing houses for their residence. Murtaza Khan Shaikh Farid Bukhari was a great builder of Akbar's time. In Ahmedabad he built a sarai, mosque and other buildings. During Jahangir's reign, Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan, Azam Khan, Khwaja Jahan Kabuli, etc. were great builders.

So far as the works of public utility are concerned, our source mentions a large number of sarais, hammams (public baths), wells, step-wells (baolis), water tanks, markets, roads, and gardens built by the nobles throughout the Empire. During the reign of Akbar, Murtaza Khan Shaikh Farid Bukhari built mosques, sarais, khanqahs and the tanks at Lahore, Agra etc. 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.

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 for their own consumption. Carpets, gold embroidered silks and high quality jewellery were the main items produced. Besides, they imported large number of luxury articles from different countries. The British and Dutch records give innumerable references to the demands made by the ruling class for which they used to pay handsomely.

Besides, hunting and other leisure and sports activities, marriages in the family, festivals, etc. were other occasions where this wealth was squandered freely.

**Check your Progress 2**

- 1) Discuss the organisation of the Mughal ruling class.

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- 2) How did the Mughal ruling class utilize the immense revenue resources at its disposal?

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**13.8 LET US SUM UP**

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In this Unit, we have seen the evolution and development of the Mughal ruling class 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 organised 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.

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**13.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) See Sections 13.2 and 13.3
- 2) See Section 13.4

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) See Section 13.5
- 2) See Section 13.7.

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# UNIT 14. MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION: CENTRAL, PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL

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## Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Administration Under Sher Shah
- 14.3 Central Administration : Its Evolution
  - 14.3.1 The Emperor
  - 14.3.2 Wakil and Wazir
  - 14.3.3 Diwani Kul
  - 14.3.4 Mir Bakhshi
  - 14.3.5 Mir Saman
  - 14.3.6 Sadr-us Sudur
- 14.4 Provincial Administration
  - 14.4.1 Provincial Governor
  - 14.4.2 Diwan
  - 14.4.3 Bakhshi
  - 14.4.4 Darogha-I Dak and the Secret Services
- 14.5 Local Administration
  - 14.5.1 Sarkars
  - 14.5.2 Pargana Administration
- 14.6 Town and Port Administration
  - 14.6.1 Kotwal
  - 14.6.2 Qil'adar
  - 14.6.3 Port Administration
- 14.7 Nature of Mughal Administration
- 14.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.9 Key Words
- 14.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 14.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit would acquaint you with the overall working of the Mughal polity. After going through the Unit you will learn about:

- the evolution of the Mughal administrative structure;
- the major administrative departments at the central level;
- the principal provincial officers, their duties and responsibilities;
- the administrative setup at the local level and its linkage with the central authority; and
- some basic features of town and port administration.

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## 14.1 INTRODUCTION

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The basic objective of the Mughal administrative setup was to exercise control over the different parts of the Empire so that recalcitrant elements challenging the Mughal sovereignty could be checked. You will appreciate the difficulties if you could visualise that each part of the Mughal Empire was inhabited by diverse set of people over whom their respective rulers or dominant chieftains exerted considerable influence. The ingenuity of the Mughal polity lies in the fact that it not only incorporated these refractory rulers and chieftains into its administrative setup but also enrolled them into military service. The logical corollary of sustaining the huge administration was to

appropriate maximum rural surplus in the form of land revenue for which the Mughal polity was geared to.

## 14.2 ADMINISTRATION UNDER SHER SHAH

In the process of evolution of Mughal administrative machinery, the Afghan interlude (1540-1555) was significant. Under Sher Shah Suri the experiment in the formation of a bureaucracy under a centralised despotism had taken place. Akbar gave it a definite shape. Thus, we can say that Sher Shah anticipated Akbar. Let us first study the administrative measures of Sher Shah. (His revenue administration will be covered in Block 5 Unit 16).

We get very little information about the working of central administration under Sher Shah. But he was an autocrat and kept everything under his direct control and supervision. Therefore, things went well so long as he was alive: his successors were no match to him.

The village was the smallest unit of administration. A group of villages constituted a **pargana** and a few **parganas** a **shiqq** which was equivalent to Mughal **sarkar**. However, in few areas, such as Punjab, Bengal, Malwa, etc. several **shiqqs** were placed under an officer whom we can equate with the Mughal **subadar**. The village-head was known as **muqaddam** who worked as the sole link between the government and the village. Though he was not the government servant, nonetheless he was responsible for maintaining law and order in his village. Next comes the **patwari**, a village record-keeper. He was also not an employee of the state but of the village community.

The **shiqqdar** was incharge of the **pargana**. His chief function was to collect the revenue at **pargana** level. He was frequently transferred under Sher Shah. He was assisted by two **karkuns** (clerks) who kept the records both in Hindi and Persian. The **munsif** was responsible for measuring the land, etc. Both (**shiqqdar** and **munsif**) were directly appointed by the government. The **qanungo** maintained the records at **pargana** level. He was a hereditary semi-official. The **fotadar** was entrusted with the treasury of the **pargana**.

A number of **parganas** formed a **sarkar** (**shiqq**), headed by **shiqqdar-i shiqqdaran**. He was the supervisor and executive officer over the **shiqqdars** of all the **parganas** in a **sarkar** (**shiqq**). The **munsif-i munsifan** performed the duties of **amin** (created later by the Mughals) at **sarkar** (**shiqq**) level. There were 66 **sarkars** (**shiqqs**) in Sher Shah's Empire.

Sher Shah attached great importance to the administration of justice. Civil cases of the Muslims were taken care of by the **qazi**, while the criminal cases were tried by the **shiqqdar**. The largest responsibility for detecting crimes rested upon **muqaddams**. If the **muqaddam** of the village, where the crime was committed, failed to capture the culprit, he was liable to severe punishment.

## 14.3 CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION: ITS EVOLUTION

The Mughal Empire had pan-Indian character. Babur and Humayun for reasons of their brief reign and that of being busy in military matters could not concentrate on establishing a definite system or pattern in administration.

By the end of Akbar's reign, we find establishment of elaborate offices with assigned functions to the heads of offices. The rules and regulations guiding both their public and private conduct had all been fixed so that the officers were converted into what can be termed the Apparatus of the Empire.

### 14.3.1 The Emperor

The ancient Indian traditions had always supported a strong ruler. The Muslim jurists and writers also held the same view. Thus, the concept of divine origin of monarchy could easily find credence among the Indian people. It is not surprising that the Mughals publicised their **jharokha darshan** with great deal of pomp and show in which the

Emperor appeared at an appointed hour before the general public, the myth being that a mere look of his majesty would redress their grievances.

Mughal Administration: Central,  
Provincial and Local

With such popular perception of the ruler, it is obvious that all officers in Mughal administration owed their position and power to the Emperor. Their appointment, promotion, demotion, and termination were subject to the ruler's personal preference and whims.

### 14.3.2 Wakil and Wazir

The institution of *wizarat* (or *wikalat* since both were used interchangeably), according to some accounts, can be traced back to the Abbasi Caliphs. Under the Delhi Sultans, the *wazir* enjoyed both civil and military powers. But under Balban his powers were reduced when the Sultan bifurcated the military powers under *diwan'arz*. As for Sher Shah, this office remained almost in abeyance under the Afghans.

The position of the *wazir* revived under the early Mughals. Babur's *wazir* Nizamuddin Muhammad Khalifa enjoyed both the civil and military powers. Humayun's *wazir* Hindu Beg also virtually enjoyed great powers.

The period of Bairam Khan's regency (1556-60) saw the rise of the *wakil-wazir* with unlimited powers under Bairam Khan. In the 8th regnal year (1564-65), Akbar took away the financial powers of the *wakil* and entrusted it into the hands of the *diwan kul* (Finance Minister). Separation of finance gave a jolt to the *wakil's* power. However, the *wakil* continued to enjoy the highest place in the Mughal bureaucratic hierarchy despite reduction in his powers.

### 14.3.3 Diwani Kul

We have already seen how Akbar strengthened the office of the *diwan* by entrusting the revenue powers to the *diwan*. The chief *diwan* (*diwani kul*) was made responsible for revenue and finances. His primary duty was to supervise the imperial treasury and check all accounts.

He personally inspected all transactions and payments in all departments. He maintained direct contact with the provincial *diwans* and their functioning was put under his vigil. His seal and signatures were necessary for the validation of all official papers involving revenue. The entire revenue collection and expenditure machinery of the Empire was under his charge. No fresh order of appointment or promotion could be affected without his seal. To check the *diwan's* power, the Mughal Emperor asked the *diwan* to submit the report on state finances daily.

The central revenue ministry was divided into many departments to look after the specific needs of the Empire. For example: *diwani khalisa*, *diwani tan* (for cash salary), *diwani jagir*, *diwani buyutat* (royal household), etc.

Each branch was further subdivided into several sections manned by a secretary, superintendents and clerks. The *mustaufi* was the auditor, and the *mushrif* was the chief accountant. The *khazanadar* looked after the Imperial treasury.

### 14.3.4 Mir Bakhshi

The *mir'arz* of Delhi Sultante changed its nomenclature to *mir bakhshi* under the Mughals. All orders of appointments of *mansabdars* and their salary papers were endorsed and passed by him. He personally supervised the branding of the horses (*dagh*) and checked the muster-roll (*chehra*) of the soldiers. On the basis of his verification, the amount of the salary was certified. Only then the *diwan* made entry in his records and placed it before the king. *Mir bakhshi* placed all matters pertaining to the military department before the Emperor. The new entrants, seeking service, were presented before the Emperor by the *mir bakhshi*. He dealt directly with provincial *bakhshis* and *waqainavis*. He accompanied the Emperor on tours, pleasure trips, hunting expeditions, battlefield, etc. His duty was to check whether proper places were allotted to the *mansabdars* according to their rank at the court. His *darbar* duties considerably added to his prestige and influence.

The *mir bakhshi* was assisted by other *bakhshis* at central level. The first three were known as 1st, 2nd and 3rd *bakhshi*. Besides, there were separate *bakhshis* for the *ahadis* (special imperial troopers) and domestic servants of the royal household (*bakhshi-i shagird peshā*).



### 14.3.5 Mir Saman

The **mir saman** was the officer incharge of the royal **karkhanas**. He was also known as **khan saman**. He was the chief executive officer responsible for the purchase of all kinds of articles and their storage for the royal household. Another important duty was to supervise the manufacture of different articles, be it weapons of war or articles of luxury. He was directly under the Emperor but for sanction of money and auditing of accounts he was to contact the **diwan**.

Under the **mir saman** there were several officers, including the **diwani buyutat** and **tahvildar** (cash keeper).

### 14.3.6 Sadr-us Sudur

The **sadr-us sudur** was the head of the ecclesiastical department. His chief duty was to protect the laws of the **shari' at**. He was also connected with the distribution of charities — both cash (**wazifa**) and land grants (**suyurghal, in'am, madad-i ma'ash**).

Initially as the head of the judicial department, he supervised the appointment of **qazis** and **muftis**. Before Shah Jahan's reign, the posts of the chief **qazi** and **sadr-us sudur** were combined and the same person held the charge of both the departments. However, under Aurangzeb, the post of the chief **qazi** (**qazi-ul quzzat**) and the **sadr-us sudur** got separated. It led to sharp curtailment of **sadr's** power. Now in the capacity of **sadr**, he supervised assignment of allowances and looked after the charitable grants. He also looked into whether the grants were given to the right persons and utilized properly. He scrutinized applications for all such grants, both fresh and renewals, and presented before the Emperor for sanction. Alms were also distributed through him.

#### Qazi-ul Quzzat

The chief **qazi** was known as **qazi-ul quzzat**. He was the head of the judiciary. (We have already mentioned that prior to Aurangzeb's reign his powers were combined in **sadr-us sudur**.) His principal duty was to administer the **shariat** law both in civil and criminal cases.

In the capacity of the chief **qazi**, he looked into the appointment of the **qazis** in the **suba, sarkar, pargana** and town levels. There was a separate **qazi** for army also.

Besides the **qazi-ul quzzat**, another important judicial officer was **mir 'adl**. **Abul Fazl** emphasized the need to have a **mir 'adl** in addition to **qazi**, for the **qazi** was to hear and decide the cases while **mir 'adl** was to execute the orders of the court.

The **muhtasibs** (censor of public morals) was to ensure the general observance of the rules of morality. His job was to keep in check the forbidden practices — wine drinking, use of **bhang** and other intoxicants, gambling, etc. In addition, he also performed some secular duties — examining weights and measures, enforcing fair prices, etc.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What were the **shiqqs**? Discuss its chief functionaries.

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- 2) Discuss the position of the **wakil** under the Mughals.

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3) Match the following:

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|----------------|---|
| i) Tahvildar   | A) Treasurer  |
| ii) Muhtasib   | B) incharge of the revenue department                 |
| iii) Mir adl   | C) maintained supply of raw materials to the artisans |
| iv) Fotadar    | D) public censor                                      |
| v) Diwan i kul | E) executer of the court orders                       |

## 14.4 PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

In 1580, Akbar divided the Empire into twelve subas (later on, three more were added). Each suba was divided into a number of sarkars and these were further divided into parganas and mahals. During Shah Jahan's reign, another administrative unit chakla came into existence. It was a cluster of a number of parganas.

### 14.4.1 Provincial Governor

The governor of a suba (subadar) was directly appointed by the Emperor. Usually the tenure of a subadar was around three years. Among the duties of the subadar, the most important one was to look after the welfare of the people and the army. He was responsible for the general law and order problem in the suba. A successful subadar was one who would encourage agriculture, trade and commerce. He was supposed to take up welfare activities like construction of sarais, gardens, wells, water reservoirs, etc. He was to take steps to enhance the revenue of the state.

### 14.4.2 Diwan

The provincial diwan was appointed by the Emperor. He was an independent officer answerable to the Centre. He was the head of the revenue department in the suba.

The provincial diwan supervised the revenue collection in the suba and maintained accounts of all expenditure incurred in the form of salaries of the officials and subordinates in the suba.

The diwan was also to take steps to increase the area under cultivation. In many cases advance loans (taqavi) were given to the peasants through his office.

A roznamcha (daily register) was maintained by the diwan which carried entries of amount that was deposited in the royal treasury by the revenue officials and zamindars. A large number of clerks worked under him.

Thus, by making the diwan independent of the subadar and by putting financial matters under the former, the Mughals were successful in checking the subadar from becoming independent.

### 14.4.3 Bakhshi

The bakhshi was appointed by the imperial court at the recommendation of the mir bakhshi. He performed exactly the same military functions as were performed by his counterpart at the Centre. He was responsible for checking and inspecting the horses and soldiers maintained by the mansabdars in the suba. He issued the paybills of both the mansabdars and the soldiers. It was his duty to prepare a list of deceased mansabdars, but often news reporters (waqai navis) of the parganas directly sent information to the provincial diwan. Often his office was combined with waqa'inigar. In this capacity his duty was to inform the Centre the happenings in his province. To facilitate his work, he posted his agents in the parganas and various important offices.

### 14.4.4 Darogha-i Dak and the Secret Services

Developing a communication network was very essential to govern a vast Empire. A separate department was assigned this important task. The imperial postal system was established for sending instructions to the far-flung areas of the Empire. The same

channel was used for receiving information. At every suba headquarters, **darogha-i dak** was appointed for this purpose. His duty was to pass on letters through the postal runners (**mewras**) to the court. For this purpose, a number of **dak chowkis** were maintained throughout the Empire where runners were stationed who carried the post to the next **chowki**. Horses and boats were also used to help in speedy delivery.

At the provincial level, **waq'ai navis** and **waqai nigars** were appointed to supply the reports directly to the Emperor. Besides, there were also **sawanih nigar** to provide confidential reports to the Emperor. Many reports of these secret service agents are available to us. They are very important sources of the history of the period.

Thus, the Mughals kept a watch over their officials in the provinces through offices and institutions independent of each other. Besides, the Mughal Emperors' frequent visits to every **suba** and the system of frequent transfers of the officials after a period of three years on average, helped the Mughals in checking the officials. But the possibility of rebellion always existed and, therefore, constant vigil through an organised system of intelligence network was established.

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## 14.5 LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

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In this section, we will discuss the working of administration at the **sarkar**, **pargana** and **mauza** (village) levels.

### 14.5.1 Sarkars

At the **sarkar** level, there were two important functionaries, the **faujdar** and the **amalguzar**.

#### Faujdar

He was the executive head of the **sarkar**. But his area of influence seems more complex. He was not only appointed at the **sarkar** level, but sometimes within a **sarkar** a number of **faujders** existed. At times their jurisdiction spread over two full **sarkars**. We hear different **faujders** appointed to **chaklas** as well. It seems his duty was mainly to take care of rebellions, and law and order problems. His jurisdiction was decided according to the needs of the region.

His primary duty was to safeguard the life and property of the residents of the area under his jurisdiction. He was to ensure safe passage to traders within his jurisdiction. As the chief executive of the region, the **faujdar** was to keep vigil over the recalcitrant **zamindars**. In special circumstances, he was to help the **amalguzar** in matters of revenue collection.

#### Amalguzar

The most important revenue collector was the **amil** or **amalguzar**. His primary duty was to assess and supervise the revenue collection through other subordinate officials. A good **amil** was supposed to increase the land under cultivation and induce the peasants to pay revenue willingly without coercion. All accounts were to be maintained by him. Daily receipts and expenditure reports were sent by him to the provincial **diwan**.

#### Thanedar

The **thana** was a place where army was stationed for the preservation of law and order. They were to arrange provisions for the army as well. These **thanas** were established specifically in disturbed areas and around the cities. Its head was designated as **thanedar**. He was appointed at the recommendation of the **subadar** and **diwan**. He was generally placed under the **faujdar** of the area.

### 14.5.2 Pargana Administration

The **parganas** were the administrative units below the **sarkar**. The **shiqqdar** was the executive officer of the **pargana** and assisted the **amils** in revenue collection. The **amil** looked after the revenue collection at the **pargana** level also. His duties were similar to those of the **amalguzar** at the **sarkar** level. The **qanungos** kept all the records pertaining to the land in his area. He was to take note of different crops in the **pargana**.

The village was the lowest administrative unit. The muqaddam was the village-headman while the patwari took care of the village revenue records. Under the Mughals, the pattern of village administration remained almost on the same lines as it was under Sher Shah.

Mughal Administration: Central,  
Provincial and Local

### Check Your Progress 2

1) Discuss the physical sub-divisions of the Mughal administrative setup.

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2) Discuss the role and functions of the Mughal faujdar.

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3) Define each of the following in two lines:

Amil .....

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Bakhshi .....

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Waqai navis.....

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## 14.6 TOWN, FORT AND PORT ADMINISTRATION

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To administer the cities and ports, the Mughals maintained separate administrative machinery.

### 14.6.1 Kotwal

For urban centres, the imperial court appointed kotwals whose primary duty was to safeguard the life and property of townsmen. He may be compared to the present day police officer in the towns and cities. The kotwal was also to maintain a register for keeping records of people coming and going out of the town. Every outsider had to take a permit from him before entering or leaving the town. The kotwal was to ensure that no illicit liquor was manufactured in his area. He also acted as superintendent of weights and measures used by the merchants and shopkeepers.

### 14.6.2 Qil'adar

The Mughal Empire had a large number of qilas (forts) situated in various parts of the country. Many of these were located at strategically important places. Each fortress was like a mini township with a large garrison. Each fort was placed under an officer called qil'adar. A cursory survey of the persons appointed as qiladars reveals that

**mansabdars** with high ranks, generally were appointed. He was incharge of the general administration of fort and the areas assigned in **jagir** to the **qiladar**. Sometimes, the **qiladars** were asked to perform the duties of the **faujdar** in that region.

### 14.6.3 Port Administration

The Mughals were aware of the economic importance of the sea-ports as these were the centres of brisk commercial activities. The port administration was independent of the provincial authority. The governor of the ports was called **mutasaddi**, who was directly appointed by the Emperor. Sometimes the office of the **mutasaddi** was auctioned and given to the highest bidder. The **mutasaddi** collected taxes on merchandise and maintained a custom-house. He also supervised the minthouse at the port. The **shahbandar** was his subordinate who was mainly concerned with the custom-house.

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## 14.7 NATURE OF MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION

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Some historians (Irfan Habib, Athar Ali etc.) hold that Mughal administrative structure was highly centralised. This centralization is manifested in the efficient working of land revenue system, **mansab** and **jagir**, uniform coinage, etc. But Stephen P. Blake and J.F. Richards, while they accept the centralising tendencies, point out that the Mughal Empire was 'patrimonial bureaucratic'. For them, everything centred around the imperial household and the vast bureaucracy. For Streusand, despite being centralised, the Mughal structure was less centralised at its periphery. Chetan Singh supports this view. He is of the opinion that even in the 17th century the Mughal Empire was not very centralised. For him, the centralised structure controlled through the efficient working of **jagirdari** seems to hold little ground. According to him, **jagir** transfers were not as frequent as they appear, and the local elements at the periphery were quite successful in influencing the policies at the centre.

The extent to which the Mughal Empire was centralised in practice can be a matter of debate. However, theoretically the Mughal administrative structure seems to be highly 'centralised and bureaucratic' in nature. The Emperor was the fountainhead of all powers, and bureaucracy was mere **banda-i dargah** (slaves of the court).

In spite of the vast range of powers enjoyed by the central ministers, they were not allowed to usurp and interfere in each others' jurisdiction nor to assume autocratic powers. The Mughals through a system of checks and balances prevented any minister or officer from gaining unlimited powers.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Identify the true/false statement.
  - i) The **kotwal** was the chief police officer at the **pargana** level.
  - ii) The office of the **mutasaddi** was sometimes auctioned to the highest bidder.
  - iii) Ports were separate independent units of administration under the Mughals.
  - iv) Mints were placed under the charge of **shahbandar**.
- 2) Define the functions of the following officers:

**Kotwal** .....

.....

**Mutasaddi** .....

.....

**Qiladar** .....

.....

## 14.8 LET US SUM UP

The Mughals tried to establish a highly centralised bureaucratic machinery which was based on 'direct' command. The Emperor was the head of all powers. A number of central ministers were directly appointed by the Emperor to assist him in the administration. Similarly, to keep them in check, he adopted the principle of checks and balances.

To have an effective administration, the Empire was divided into subas (provinces), sarkars, parganas and villages. The provincial administration was on the lines of the Centre, headed by separate officers. Here also none of the officer enjoyed supreme powers. Both the subadars and diwans worked independently and were responsible to the Centre only. Cities and port-towns had separate administrative machinery. The kotwal in the cities and mutasaddis in the port towns normally took care of the law and order situation. The Mughals had certain military outposts as well where separate qila'dars were appointed. At local level, the pargana was the most important administrative unit while the villages formed the smallest unit of administration.

## 14.9 KEY WORDS

Amin : revenue assessor  
Shariat : Islamic law

## 14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Read Sec. 14.2. Discuss the administrative divisions and mention the main functions of shiqqdar, munsif, etc.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 14.3.2. Not only discuss their functions and powers but also analyse how and why their power declined.
- 3) i) C    ii) D    iii) E    iv) A    v) B

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Read Sub-sec. 14.4.1. Discuss only the territorial subdivisions.
- 2) Read Sub-sec. 14.5.1. Discuss the position of faujdars; their jurisdiction and their duties.
- 3) Read Sub-sec. 14.4.3, 14.4.4 and 14.5.1

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) i) X    ii) √    iii) √    iv) X
- 2) See Section 14.6

# UNIT 15 MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION : MANSAB AND JAGIR

## Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Mansab System
  - 15.2.1 The Dual Ranks : Zat and Sawar
  - 15.2.2 The Three Classes of Mansabdars
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## 15.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will discuss the mansab and jagir systems, the two main organs of Mughal Administration. After reading this unit you will be able to know the:

- basic features of mansab system under Akbar;
- changes introduced in mansabdari during the 17th century;
- the main features and working of jagirdari; and
- the various types of jagirs.

## 15.1 INTRODUCTION

The mansab and jagir systems under the Mughals in India did not develop suddenly; they evolved steadily through the time. These institutions were borrowed in some form from Western Asia and modified to suit the needs of the time in India.

The mansabdars were an integral part of the Mughal bureaucracy and formed, as Percival Spear says, 'an elite within elite'. They were appointed in all government departments except the judiciary. They held the important offices of wazir, bakshi, faujdar and the subadar, etc. We will also discuss the jagir system.

## 15.2 MANSAB SYSTEM

The word mansab means a place or position and therefore it means a rank in the mansab system under the Mughals.

During Babur's time, the term mansabdar was not used; instead, another term wajhdar was employed. The latter differed in some ways from the mansab system that evolved under the Mughals after Babur.

Akbar gave mansabs to both military and civil officers on the basis of their merit or service to the state. To fix the grades of officers and classify his soldiers, he was broadly inspired by the principles adopted by Chingiz Khan. The latter's army had been organised on decimal system. The lowest unit was of ten horsemen, then came one

hundred, one thousand and so on. Abul Fazl states that Akbar had established 66 grades of mansabdars ranging from commanders of 10 horsemen to 10,000 horsemen, although only 33 grades have been mentioned by him.

Mansab denoted three things:

- i) It determined the status of its holder (the mansabdar) in the official hierarchy.
- ii) It fixed the pay of the holder.
- iii) It also laid upon the holder the obligation of maintaining a specified number of contingent with horses and equipment.

### 15.2.1 The Dual Ranks: Zat and Sawar

Initially a single number represented the rank, personal pay and the size of contingent of mansabdar. In such a situation if a person held a mansab of 500, he was to maintain a contingent of 500 and receive allowances to maintain it. In addition, he was to receive a personal pay according to a schedule and undertake other obligations specified for that rank. After some time, the rank of mansabdar instead of one number, came to be denoted by two numbers — zat and sawar. This innovation most probably occurred in 1595-96.

The first number (zat) determined the mansabdar's personal pay (talab-khassa) and his rank in the organisation. The second number (sawar) fixed the number of horses and horsemen to be maintained by the mansabdar and, accordingly, the amount he would receive for his contingent (tabinan).

There has been controversy about the dual rank. William Irvine thought that the double rank meant that the mansabdars had to maintain from his personal pay two contingents of troops. Abdul Aziz, close to modern point of view, held that the zat pay was purely personal with no involvement of troops. He rejected the theory of Irvine by stating that it meant the maintenance of one contingent and not two. Athar Ali clarified the position. He says that the first number (zat) placed the mansabdar in the appropriate position among the officials of the state and, accordingly, the salary of the mansabdar was determined. The second rank (sawar) determined the number of horses and horsemen the mansabdar had to furnish.

### 15.2.2 The Three Classes of Mansabdars

In 1595-96, the mansabdars were classified into three groups :

- a) those with horsemen (sawar) equal to the number of the zat;
- b) those with horsemen half or more than half of the number of the zat, and
- c) those whose sawar rank was less than half of their zat rank.

The sawar rank was either equal or less than the zat. Even if the former was higher, the mansabdar's position in the official hierarchy would not be affected. For example, a mansabdar with 4000 zat and 2000 sawar (4000/2000 in short) was higher in rank than a mansabdar of 3000/3000, although the latter had a higher number of horsemen under him.

But there are exceptions to this rule particularly when the mansabdar was serving in a difficult terrain amidst the rebels. In such cases, the state often increased the sawar rank without altering the zat rank. Obviously the system was not a static one : it changed to meet the circumstances. Thus reforms were undertaken without modifying the basic structure. One such reform was the use of conditional rank (mashrut), which meant an increase of sawar rank for a temporary period. This was an emergency measure adopted in the time of crisis, that is, the permission to recruit more horsemen at the expense of the state.

Another development that took place was the introduction of *do aspa sih aspa* under Jahangir. Mahabat Khan was the first to get it in the 10th year of Jahangir's reign. According to this, a part or full sawar rank of mansabdar was made *do aspa sih aspa*.

For example, if a mansabdar held a mansab of 4000 zat/4000 sawar, he may be granted *huma do aspa sih aspa* (all two-three horses). In this case the original sawar rank would be ignored, and the mansabdar will maintain double the number of *do aspa sih aspa* (here  $4000 + 4000 = 8000$ ). Again, if the rank was 4000 zat/4000 sawar



of which 2000 was *do aspa sih aspa*, then it would mean that out of the original sawar rank of 4000, the ordinary or *barawurdi* troopers will be only 2000 and the additional rank of 2000 *do aspa sih aspa* will double itself to 4000 ordinary troopers. Thus, the total number of horsemen would be 6000.

What could have been the reasons for adopting *do aspa sih aspa* system? Our sources do not help us in this respect. But we can visualize the following: Jahangir, after becoming emperor, wanted to promote nobles of his confidence and strengthen them militarily, but there were some practical problems. As we noticed in sub-section 15.2.2, generally the sawar rank could not be higher than *zat* rank. In such a situation, any increase in sawar rank would have meant an increase in *zat* rank also. The increase in the latter would have led to additional payment as personal pay thereby increasing the burden on treasury. Moreover, there would have been an upward mobility of the noble in the official hierarchy which was likely to give rise to jealousy among the nobles.

In fact *do aspa sih aspa* was a way out to grant additional sawar rank without disturbing the *zat* rank or *mansab* hierarchy. It also meant a saving for the state by not increasing the *zat* rank.

### 15.2.3 Appointment and Promotion of Mansabdars

The *mir bakshi* generally presented the candidates to the Emperor who recruited them directly. But the recommendation of the leading nobles and governors of the provinces were also usually accepted. An elaborate procedure involving the *diwan*, *bakshi* and others followed after which it went to the Emperor for confirmation. The *farman* was then issued under the seal of the *wazir*. In case of promotion the same procedures were followed.

Granting of *mansab* was a prerogative of the Emperor. He could appoint anybody as *mansabdar*. There was no examination or written test as it existed in China. Generally, certain norms seem to have been followed. A survey of the *mansabdars* appointed during the reigns of the Mughal Emperors show that some groups were more favoured than the others.

The most favoured category were the sons and close kinsmen of persons who were already in service. This group was called *khanazad*.

Another group which was given preference was of those who held high positions in other kingdoms. The main areas from which such people came were the Uzbek and Safavi Empires and the Deccan kingdoms. These included Irani, Turani, Iraqi and Khurasani. The attraction for Mughal *mansab* was such that Adil Shah of Bijapur in 1636 requested the Mughal Emperor not to appoint *mansabdars* from among his nobles.

The rulers of autonomous principalities formed yet another group which received preferential treatment in recruitment and promotions. The main beneficiaries from this category were the Rajput kings.

Promotions were generally given on the basis of performance and lineage. Manucci, writing during the last years of Aurangzeb's reign, says: "To get the *hazari* or the pay of one thousand, it is necessary to wait a long time and work hard. For the kings only grant it sparingly, and only to those who by their services or their skill in affairs have arrived at the stage of deserving it. In having this rate of pay accorded to you, they give you also the title of *Omera* (*Umara*) — that is noble." However, in actual practice racial considerations played important role in promotions. Unflinching loyalty was yet another consideration.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Define *zat* and *sawar* rank.

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2) What were the three classes of mansabdars?

### 15.2.4 Maintenance of Troops and Payment

Mansabdars were asked to present their contingents for regular inspection and physical verification. The job of inspection was performed by the mir bakshi's department. It was done by a special procedure. It was called *dagh o chehra*. All the horses presented for inspection by a particular noble were branded with a specific pattern to distinguish these from those of other nobles through a seal (*dagh*). The physical description of troops (*chehra*) was also recorded. This way the possibility of presenting the same horse or troop for inspection was greatly reduced. This was rigorously followed. We come across a number of cases where a reduction in rank was made for nonfulfilment of obligation of maintaining specified contingents. Abdul Hamid Lahori in his book *Badshahnama* mentions that under Shah Jahan it was laid down that if a mansabdar was posted in the same province where he held jagir, he had to muster one-third of the contingents of his sawar rank. In case he was posted outside, he had to muster one-fourth. If posted in Balkh and Samarqand, he had to maintain one-fifth.

The scale of salary was fixed for the zat rank, but one rank had no arithmetical or proportionate relationship with the other. In other words, the salary did not go up or go down proportionately.

The table given below shows the salary for the zat rank per month during Akbar's period. (Please note that under Akbar, zat rank above 5000 was given only to the princes. In the last years of Akbar, the only noble who got the rank of 7000 zat was Raja Man Singh.)

Pay for Zat rank

Zat rank	Class I (Rs.)	Class II (Rs.)	Class III (Rs.)
7,000	45,000	—	—
5,000	30,000	29,000	28,000
4,000	22,000	21,800	21,600
3,000	17,000	16,800	16,700
2,000	12,000	11,900	11,800
1,000	8,200	8,100	8,000

The salary for the sawar rank was the sum total of the remuneration given to each trooper which was fixed and uniformly applicable, whatever the number of the sawar rank might be. In the time of Akbar, the rate of payment was determined by a number of factors such as the number of horses per trooper (presented for *dagh*), the breeds of the horses etc. The rates fluctuated between Rs. 25 to 15 per month.

### Month Scale

The mansabdars were generally paid through revenue assignments (jagirs). The biggest problem here was that the calculation was made on the basis of the expected income (jama) from the jagir during one year. It was noticed that the actual revenue collection (hasil) always fell short of the estimated income. In such a situation, the mansabdar's salaries were fixed by a method called month-scales. For example, if a jagir yielded only half of the jama, it was called shashmaha (six-monthly). If it yielded only one-fourth, it was considered sihmaha (3 monthly). The month-scale was applied to cash salaries also.

There were deductions from the sanctioned pay. The largest deductions were from the Deccanis, who had to pay a fourth part (Chauthai). There were other deductions known as khurak dawwah (fodder for beasts) belonging to the Emperor. Those who received cash (naqd), two dams in a rupee were deducted (dodami). Often there were fines (jarimana) imposed for various reasons. With the reduction of salaries, there was thus a definite decline in the income of the nobles.

You have already read in Unit 12 how the revenue resources of the Empire were distributed among the ruling class. It is estimated that 80% of the total revenue resources of the Empire was appropriated by 1,571 mansabdars. This shows how powerful the mansabdars were.

### 15.2.5 The System of Escheat

Many contemporary accounts, especially those of the European travellers, refer to the practice whereby the Emperor took possession of the wealth of the nobles after their death. The practice is known as escheat (zabt). The reason was that the nobles often took loan from the state which remained unpaid till their death. It was duty of the khan saman (see unit 14) to take over the nobles' property and adjust the state demand (mutalaba), after which the rest of the property was given to the heirs or sometimes distributed by the Emperor among the heirs himself without any regard for the Islamic inheritance laws. It seems that in most cases it depended on the will of the Emperor. Sometimes the state insisted on escheating the entire wealth. In 1666, Aurangzeb issued a farman that after the death of a noble without heir, his property would be deposited in the state treasury. This was confirmed by another farman in 1691 which also instructed the state officers not to attach the property of the nobles whose heirs were in government service because the latter could be asked to pay the mutalaba.

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## 15.3 COMPOSITION OF MANSABDARS

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In Unit 12, you have already read the racial composition of the ruling class. Here we very briefly recapitulate the same.

Despite the theoretical position that mansabdari was open to all, the Mughals, in practice, considered heredity as an important factor. It appears that the khanzads (house-born; descendants of mansabdar) had the first claim. Out of a total number of 575 mansabdars holding the rank of 1000 and above during the reign of Aurangzeb, the khanzads numbered about 272 (roughly 47%). Apart from the khanzads, a number of mansabdars were recruited from the zamindars (chieftains). Out of 575 mansabdars in 1707, there were 81 zamindars. The Mughals also welcomed Persian, Chagatai, Uzbeks as well as the Deccanis in the mansabdari. Certain racial groups were well entrenched. They were the Turanis (Central Asians), Iranis, Afghans, Indian Muslims (shaikhzadas), Rajputs, Marathas and the Deccanis, the last two were recruited by Aurangzeb on larger scale due to military reasons.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What was month scale?

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.....  
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2) Why was the system of *do aspa sih aspa* adopted?

3) What do you understand by system of escheat?

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## 15.4 JAGIR SYSTEM

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Revenue assignments were made by the Delhi Sultans which were termed *iqta* and its holder *iqtdar* (See Blocks 5 & 6, Course EHI-03). The system was developed to appropriate the surplus from the peasantry and distribute it among the nobles. This also included the administration of the area by the assignee.

The Mughal Emperors, too, did the same. These assignments were given in lieu of cash salaries. The areas assigned were generally called *jagir*, and its holders *jagirdar*. Sometimes terms like '*iqta*'/'*iqtdar*' and *tuyul*/*tuyuldar* were also used, but very sparingly. It must be made clear that it was not land that was assigned, but the income/revenue from the land/area was given to the *jagirdars*. This system developed over a period of time and underwent many changes before stabilising. However, the basic framework was developed during Akbar's reign. Let us first study the early form of *jagir* system.

### 15.4.1 The Early Phase

Babur, after his conquest, restored to the former Afghan chieftains or conferred upon them assignment of approximately more than one-third of the conquered territories. The holders of such assignments (*wajh*) were known as *wajhdars* (*wajh* means remuneration). A fixed sum was assigned as *wajh* out of the total revenue of the area. The rest of the revenue of the territories was deemed to be a part of the *khalisa*. The *zamindars* continued in their respective areas, but in other conquered areas Babur ruled through *hakims* (governors). The same pattern perhaps continued under Humayun.

### 15.4.2 Organisation of Jagir System

During Akbar's period all the territory was broadly divided into two: *khalisa* and *jagir*. The revenue from the first went to Imperial treasury, and that from *jagir* was assigned to *jagirdars* in lieu of their salary in cash (*naqd*) according to their rank. Some *mansabdars* got cash salary, and, hence, they were called *naqdi*. A few were given both *jagir* and cash. The bulk of the territory was assigned to *mansabdars* according to their rank. The estimated revenue was called *jama* or *jamadami* as it was calculated in *dam* (a small copper coin, 1/40th of the silver *rupaya* on the average). The *jama* included land revenue, inland transit duties, port customs and other taxes which were

known as **sair Jihat**. Another term used by the revenue officials was **hasil**, that is, the amount of revenue actually collected. You must understand these two terms — **jama** and **hasil** — which you will come across frequently. The revenue officials used yet another term, that is, **paibaqi**. This was applied to those areas whose revenue were yet to be assigned to **mansabdars**.

In the 31st year of Akbar's reign, the **jama** of the **khalisa** in the province of Delhi, Awadh and Allahabad amounted to less than 5% of the total revenue. Under Jahangir, almost 9/10 of the territory was assigned in **jagir** and only 1/10 was available for the **khalisa**. The ratio of **jagir** and **khalisa** kept fluctuating. Under Shah Jahan, it rose to one-eleventh and, by the 20th year, it was nearly one-seventh. The trend continued in the next reign; in the 10th year of Aurangzeb, the **jama** of the **khalisa** amounted to almost one-fifth of the total. However, in the later part of Aurangzeb's reign, there was a great pressure on the **khalisa** as the number of claimants for **jagir** increased with the increase of the number of **mansabdars**.

Another important feature of the **jagir** system was shifting of **jagir**-holders from one **jagir** to another for administrative reasons. This system of transfers checked the **jagirdars** from developing local roots. At the same time, its disadvantage was that it discouraged the **jagirdars** from taking long term measures for the development of their areas. They were merely interested in extracting as much revenue as possible in a short time.

### 15.4.3 Various Types of Jagirs

There were generally four types of revenue assignments:

- a) **jagirs**, which were given in lieu of pay, were known as **jagir tankha**;
- b) **jagirs** given to a person on certain conditions were called **mashrut jagirs**;
- c) **jagirs** which involved no obligation of service and were independent of rank were called **in'am jagirs**, and
- d) **jagirs** which were assigned to **zamindars** (chieftains) in their homelands, were called **watan jagirs**. Under Jahangir some Muslim nobles were given **jagirs** resembling to **watan jagir** called **al-tamgha**.

**Tankha jagirs** are transferable every three or four years, **watan jagirs** remained hereditary and non-transferable. Sometimes **watan jagir** was converted into **khalisa** for a certain period as Aurangzeb did in case of Jodhpur in 1679. When a **zamindar** or a tributary chief was made a **mansabdar**, he was given **jagir tankha**, apart from his **watan jagir**, at another place if the salary of his rank was more than the income from his **watan jagir**. Maharaja Jaswant Singh, holding **watan jagir** in Marwar, held **jagir tankha** in Hissar.

### 15.4.4 Management of Jagirs

The **jagirdar** was allowed to collect only authorised revenue (**mal wajib**) in accordance with the Imperial regulations. He employed his own officials (**karkun**) like **amil** (**amalguzar**), **fotadar** (treasurer), etc. who acted on his behalf.

The Imperial officials kept watch on the **jagirdars**. The **diwan** of the **suba** was supposed to prevent the oppression on the peasants by the **jagirdars**. From the 20th year of Akbar, **amin** was posted in each province to see that the **jagirdars** were following Imperial regulations regarding collection of revenue. The **faujdar** often helped the **jagirdar** to collect revenue whenever difficulties arose. It appears that from the period of Aurangzeb, bigger **jagirdars** were having **faujdari** powers, too.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Write two lines each on various types of jagirs.

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.....

2) Why were jagirdars transferred?

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## 15.5 LET US SUM UP

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Mansabdari and jagirdari were the two main institutions of the Mughal Empire, which embraced both civil and military sectors of administration. The system was developed to create a centralised administrative system as well as creating a large force. Mansabdars and their large forces were used to expand the empire and administer it effectively. The main features of mansab system were as follows:

- Mansabdars held dual ranks — *zat* and *sawar*, the former indicated the status of the officer in the administrative hierarchy, and which also determined the personal pay. The latter denoted the contingent they were expected to maintain.
- Mansabdars were divided into 3 classes on the basis of the ratio between their *zat* and *sawar* ranks.
- The salaries and obligation of maintaining troops were governed by a definite set of rules which underwent changes from time to time.

For revenue purposes all the land was divided into two — the *jagir* and *khalisa*. The land revenue collected from the *khalisa* went to the royal treasury while that from the *jagir* to mansabdars.

Mansabdars were paid through the assignment of *jagirs*. The *jagir* system as an institution was used to appropriate the surplus from the peasantry. At the same time it was used for distributing the revenue resources among the ruling classes. Of the four types of *jagirs* given to assignees, the *watan jagir* was a very effective way of absorbing Indian chieftains in the Mughal ruling class.

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## 15.6 KEY WORDS

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<b>Barawurdi</b>	:	under Akbar the advance paid to mansabdars for maintenance of troops was called <i>barawardi</i> . From the reign of Jahangir onwards it was used for regular payment given to nobles for the maintenance of troops.
<b>Khanazad</b>	:	the sons and close kinsmen of persons who were already holding positions in the nobility.
<b>Khurak-dawab</b>	:	fodder allowance for animals.
<b>Mashrut</b>	:	the conditional rank given to nobles.
<b>Talab Khasa</b>	:	The personal pay of the nobles.
<b>Tabinan</b>	:	the contingent maintained by nobles.
<b>Umara</b>	:	plural of <i>amir</i> i.e. noble.

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## 15.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) **Zat** indicated the personal pay of the **mansabdar** while **sawar** indicated the number of troops to be maintained. See Sub-sec. 15.2.1.
- 2) The **mansabdars** were categorised into three classes on the basis of their **zat** and **sawar** ranks. See Sub-sec. 15.2.2.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Month scale was devised to bridge the gap between the estimated income and actual income (net realisation of revenue) of the **mansabdar**. See Sub-sec. 15.2.4.
- 2) This system was adopted to raise the **sawar** rank of mansabdars without disturbing the **zat** rank. See sub-sec. 15.2.4.
- 3) Through the system of escheat the Mughal state used to take control of the assets of the deceased noble. For details see Sub-sec. 15.2.5.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sub-sec. 15.4.3 where four types of jagirs are discussed.
- 2) **Jagirdars** were transferred to adjust the changes in their ranks and salaries. Besides, it was a method to discourage **jagirdars** from developing local roots in the areas under their jurisdictions. See sub-sec. 15.4.4.

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## SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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- 1) Athar Ali, **Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb**
- 2) R. P. Tripathi, **Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire**
- 3) U.N. Day, **Mughal Government**
- 4) P. Saran, **Provincial Administration under the Mughals**
- 5) Anuruddha Ray, **Mughal Administration**
- 6) Ibu Hasan, **Central Structure of the Mughal Empire**

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# UNIT 16 MUGHAL LAND REVENUE SYSTEM

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## Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Methods of Land Revenue Assessment
- 16.3 Magnitude of Land Revenue Demand
- 16.4 Mode of Payment
- 16.5 Collection of Land Revenue
- 16.6 Relief Measures
- 16.7 Land Revenue Administration
- 16.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.9 Key Words
- 16.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 16.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit, we will discuss some important aspects of Mughal land revenue system. After going through this Unit, you should be able to know the following:

- the methods of assessment;
- the magnitude of land revenue demand;
- mode of collection of land revenue;
- the different methods used to collect the land revenue;
- what sort of relief was available to peasants in case of adverse circumstances; and
- the duties and obligations of different officials engaged in land revenue system.

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## 16.1 INTRODUCTION

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The central feature of the agrarian system under the Mughals was the alienation from the peasant of his surplus produce (produce over and above the subsistence level) in the form of land revenue which was the main source of state's income. Early British administrators regarded the land revenue as rent of the soil because they had a notion that the king was the owner of the land. Subsequent studies of Mughal India have shown that it was a tax on the crop and was thus different from the land revenue as conceived by the British. Abul Fazl in his *Ain-i Akbari* justifies the imposition of taxes by the state saying that these are the remuneration of sovereignty, paid in return for protection and justice.

The Persian term for land revenue during the Mughal rule was **mal** and **mal wajib**. **Kharaj** was not in regular use.

The process of land revenue collection has two stages: (a) assessment (**tashkhis/jama**), and (b) actual collection (**hasil**). Assessment was made to fix the state demand. On the basis of this demand, actual collection was done separately for **kharif** and **rabi** crops.



## 16.2 METHODS OF LAND REVENUE ASSESSMENT

Under the Mughals assessment was separately made for *kharif* and *rabi* crops. After the assessment was over a written document called *patta*, *qaul* or *qaul-qarar* was issued in which the amount or the rate of the revenue demand was mentioned. The assessee was in return supposed to give *qabuliyat* i.e. 'the "acceptance" of the obligation imposed upon him, stating when and how he would make the payments'.

We will discuss here a few commonly used methods:

- 1) **Ghalla Bakhshi (Crop-sharing):** In some areas it was called *bhaoli* and *batal*. The *Ain-i Akbari* notes three types of crop-sharing:
  - a) Division of crop at the threshing floor after the grain was obtained. This was done in the presence of both the parties in accordance with agreement.
  - b) **Khet batal:** The share was decided when the crop was still standing in the fields, and a division of the field was marked.
  - c) **Lang batal:** The crop was cut and stacked in heaps without separating grain and a division of crop in this form was made.

In Malikzada's *Nigarnama-i Munshi* (late 17th century) crop sharing has been mentioned as the best method of revenue assessment and collection. Under this method, the peasants and the state shared the risks of the seasons equally. But as Abul Fazl says it was expensive from the viewpoint of the state since the latter had to employ a large number of watchmen, else there were chances of misappropriation before harvesting. When Aurangzeb introduced it in the Deccan, the cost of revenue collection doubled simply from the necessity of organising a watch on the crops.

- 2) **Kankut/Danabandi:** The word *kankut* is derived from the words *kan* and *kut*. *Kan* denotes grain while *kut* means to estimate or appraisal. Similarly, *dana* means grain while *bandi* is fixing or determining anything. It was a system where the grain yield (or productivity) was estimated. In *kankut*, at first, the field was measured either by means of a rope or by pacing. After this, the per *bigha* productivity from good, middling and bad lands was estimated and the revenue demand was fixed accordingly.
- 3) **Zabti:** In Mughal India, it was the most important method of assessment. The origin of this practice is traced to Sher Shah. During Akbar's reign, the system was revised a number of times before it took the final shape.

Sher Shah had established a *rai* or per *bigha* yield for lands which were under continuous cultivation (*polaj*), or those land which very rarely allowed to lie fallow (*parauti*). The *rai* was based on three rates, representing good, middling and low yields and one third of the sum of these was appropriated as land revenue. Akbar adopted Sher Shah's *rai*. Akbar introduced his so-called *karori* experiment and appointed *karoris* all over North India in 1574-75. The entire *jagir* was converted into *khalisa*. On the basis of the information provided by the *karoris* regarding the actual produce, local prices, productivity, etc. in 1580, Akbar instituted a new system *ain dahsala*, where the average produce of different crops as well as the average prices prevailing over the last ten years (15-24 R.Y. of Akbar) were calculated. One-third of the average produce was the state's minimum share. Under *karori* experiment, measurement of all provinces took place. Bamboo rods with iron rings called *tanab* were used instead of hempen ropes. On the basis of productivity and prices prevailing in different regions they were divided for revenue purposes into *dastur* circles. The rates of assessment in cash for each crop in every *dastur* was decided, and the demand was fixed accordingly. The main features of the *zabti* system as it finally came into operation under Akbar were:

- i) measurement of land was essential;
- ii) fixed cash revenue rates known as *dastur us amal* or *dastur* for each crop.
- iii) all the collection was made in cash.

From an administrative point of view, *zabti* system had some merits:

- i) measurement could always be rechecked;
- ii) due to fixed **dasturs**, local officials could not use their discretion; and
- iii) with fixing the permanent **dasturs**, the uncertainties and fluctuation in levying the land revenue demand were greatly reduced.

There were some limitations of this system also:

- i) It could not be applied if the quality of the soil was not uniform;
- ii) If the yield was uncertain, this method was disadvantageous to peasants because risks were borne by them alone. Abul Fazl says, "If the peasant does not have the strength to bear **zabt**, the practice of taking a third of the crop as revenue is followed.";
- iii) This was an expensive method as a cess of one **dam** per **bigha** known as **zabitanā** was given to meet the costs towards the maintenance of the measuring party; and
- iv) Much fraud could be practised in recording the measurement.

**Zabti** system was adopted only in the core regions of the Empire. The main provinces covered under **zabti** were Delhi, Allahabad, Awadh, Agra, Lahore and Multan. Even in these **zabti** provinces, other methods of assessment were also practiced, depending on the circumstances of the area.

**Nasaq** was not an independent method of assessment; it was subordinate to other methods. It was a method or procedure which could be adopted whatever be the basic method of revenue assessment and collection that was in force. In North India it was **nasaqi zabti**, while in Kashmir it was **nasaqi ghalla bakhshi**. When it was applied under **zabti** the annual measurement was dispensed with and previous figures were taken into account with certain variations. Since **zabti** system involved annual measurement, the administration and revenue payers both wanted to replace it. **Zabti-iharsala** or annual measurement was, therefore, set aside with some modifications.

### Revenue Farming (Ijara)

**Ijara** system or revenue farming was another feature of the revenue system of this time. Though, as a rule Mughals disapproved of this practice, in actual fact certain villages were sometimes farmed out. Generally, these villages, where peasant did not have resources available for undertaking cultivation or where owing to some calamity cultivation could not be done, were farmed out on **ijara**. The revenue officials or their relatives were not supposed to take land on **ijara**. It was expected that revenue farmers would not extract more than the stipulated land revenue from the peasants. But this was hardly the case in actual practice.

The practice of **ijara**, it seems, could not have been very common in the **zabti** provinces, Gujarat and the Mughal Dakhin. In the **khalsa** lands also this practice was very rare. However, in the **jagir** lands it became a common feature. Revenue assignees (**jagirdars**) farmed out their assignments in lieu of a lump sum payment, generally to the highest bidders.

Sometimes, **jagirdars** sub-assigned part of their **jagirs** to his subordinates/troopers. During the 18th century **ijara** system became a common form of revenue assessment and collection.

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## 16.3 MAGNITUDE OF LAND REVENUE DEMAND

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Let us first examine what share of the produce was taken by the state as land revenue. Abul Fazl says that no moral limits could be set for the demand of the ruler from his subjects; "the subject ought to be thankful even if he were made to part with all his possessions by the protector of his life and honour." He adds further that "just sovereigns" do not exact more than what is required for their purposes which, of course, they would themselves determine.

Aurangzeb explicitly said that the land revenue should be appropriated according to *shariat*, i.e., not more than one half of the total produce.

European traveller Pelsaert, who visited India in the early 17th century, declared that "so much is wrung from the peasants that even dry bread is scarcely left to fill their stomachs." Irfan Habib comments: "Revenue demand accompanied by other taxes and regular and irregular exactions of officials was a heavy burden on peasantry".

Sher Shah formed three crop rates on the basis of the productivity of the soil, and demand was fixed at 1/3 of the average of these three rates for each crop. Abul Fazl comments that under Akbar, Sher Shah's 1/3 of revenue demand formed the lowest rate of assessment. Recent studies show that revenue demand under the Mughals ranged between 1/3 to 1/2 of the produce, and sometimes even 3/4 in some areas. On close scrutiny we find that the revenue demand varied from *suba* to *suba*. In Kashmir, the demand in theory was one-third while in practice it was two-thirds of the total produce. Akbar ordered that only one-half should be demanded.

In the province of Thatta (Sind), the land revenue was taken at the rate of one-third. Yusuf Mirak, the author of *Mazhar-i-Shahjahan* (a memoir on the administration of Sind written in 1634), explains that the Tarkhans who held Thatta in *jagir* when the *Ain-i-Akbari* was written, did not take more than half of the produce from the peasantry and also in some cases they took one-third or a fourth part of the total produce.

For Ajmer *suba*, we find different rates of revenue demand. In fertile regions of eastern Rajasthan ranged from one-third to one-half of the produce. Irfan Habib on the basis of the *Ain-i-Akbari* says that in the desert regions, proportion amounted to one-seventh or even one-eighth of the crop. But Sunita Budhwar Zaidi points out that there is no evidence in other sources of such low rates from any locality of Rajasthan. Even in Jaisalmer, one-fifth of the produce was collected from the *rabi* and one-fourth from the *kharif* crop.

In Central India, rates varied from one-half, one-third to two-fifths: In Deccan, one-half was appropriated from the ordinary lands while one-third was taken from those irrigated by wells and one-fourth was taken from high grade crops.

Aurangzeb's *farman* to Rasik Das Karori stipulates that when the authorities took recourse to crop-sharing, usually in the case of distressed peasantry, the proportions levied should be one-half, or one-third or two-fifths. Rates under Aurangzeb were higher than that of Akbar. Perhaps it was due to the fact that there was a general rise in agricultural prices and, thus, there was no real change in the pitch of demand.

In the case of Rajasthan it is reported that revenue rates varied according to the class or-caste of the revenue payers. Satish Chandra and Dilbagh Singh have shown that Brahmins and Banias paid revenue on concessional rates in a certain *pargana* of Eastern Rajasthan.

It may be safely assumed that in general the rate of revenue demand was from 1/2 to 1/3 of the produce. Since, the revenue was imposed per unit of area 'uniformly' irrespective of the nature of the holding, it was regressive in nature—those who possessed large holdings felt the burden less than those who possessed small holdings.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Define the following:

**Ghalla Bakhshi:** .....

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**Kankut:** .....

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**Chusqaq:** .....

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**Polaj:** .....

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**Rai:** .....

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2) Enumerate merits and demerits of the **zabti** system.

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3) Discuss the pattern of revenue demand in Mughal India.

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## 16.4 MODE OF PAYMENT

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The practice of collecting land revenue in cash was in use in some regions even as early as the 13th century. In the Mughal period, the peasant under **zabti** system had to pay revenue in cash. No provision is on record for allowing a commutation of cash into kind in any circumstances. However, under crop-sharing and **kankut**, commutation into cash was permitted at market prices. Cash nexus was firmly established in almost every part of the Empire.

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## 16.5 COLLECTION OF LAND REVENUE:

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Under **ghalla bakhshi**, the state's share was seized directly from the field. In other systems, the state collected its share at the time of harvest.

Abul Fazl maintains that "Collection should begin for **rabi** from **holi** and for **kharif** from **Dashehra**. The officials should not delay it for another crop"

In the **kharif** season, the harvesting of different crops was done at different times and the revenue was accordingly to be collected in three stages depending on the type of crops. Thus, under **kharif** the revenue could only be collected in instalments.

The **rabi** harvest was all gathered within a very short period. The authorities tried to collect revenue before the harvest was cut and removed from the fields. By the end of the 17th century, the authorities in desperation started preventing the peasants from reaping their fields until they had paid their revenue. Irfan Habib comments: "It shows how oppressive it was to demand the revenue from the peasant before the harvest, when he would have absolutely nothing left. The practice was at the same time the work of a well developed money economy, for it would have been impossible to attempt it unless the officials expected that the peasants would pay up by pledging their crops before hand to grain merchants or moneylenders".

Usually, the revenue was deposited in the treasury through the 'amil' or revenue collector. Akbar encouraged the peasants to pay directly, Todar Mal recommended that the peasants of trusted villages, within the time limit, could deposit their revenue in the treasury themselves and could obtain receipt. The village accountant, patwari, made endorsement in his register to establish the amount paid. Irfan Habib considers these regulations as precautionary measures on the part of administration to avoid fraud and embezzlement.

## 16.6 RELIEF MEASURES

Abbas Khan in the *Tarikh-i Sher Shahi* writes, "Sher Shah declared that concessions could be permitted at assessment time, but never at that of collection". Aurangzeb in his *farman* to Muhammad Hashim karori, instructed that no remissions were to be allowed once the crop had been cut.

Whatever be the method of revenue assessment, there was some provision for relief in the case of bad harvests. We have already seen that in *ghalla bakhsh* and *kankut*, state's share would rise and fall depending upon the current harvest. In *zabti*, relief was given by excluding the area designated *nabud* from assessment.

In practice, it was not possible to collect the entire amount, and there was always a balance which was to be collected next year. It also seems to have been a common practice to demand the arrears, owed by peasants who had fled or died, from their neighbours. Aurangzeb issued a *hasb ul hukm* in A.D. 1674-75 to check this practice in *khalisa* and *jagir* lands, arguing that no peasant could be held responsible for arrears contracted by others.

*Taqavi* (strength giving) loans were granted to enable the peasants to buy seeds and cattle. Abul Fazl writes, "the *amalguzar* should assist the empty handed peasants by advancing them loans". Todar Mal had suggested that *taqavi* should be given to cultivators who were in distressed circumstances and did not have seeds or cattle. These loans were interest-free, normally to be repaid at the time of harvest. These were advanced through the *chaudhris* and *muqaddams*. Abul Fazl says that the loans should be recovered slowly.

New wells were dug up and old ones were repaired for extension and improvement of cultivation.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What was the medium of payment of land revenue?

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- 2) What were the forms of relief given to the peasants at the time of natural calamity?

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## 16.7 LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

We get ample information about the revenue machinery for *khalisa* lands. But our

ation for jagir administration is quite easy. Since jagirdars were transferred every two or three years, they had no knowledge of revenue paying capacity of the people and local customs. So we find three types of officials:

- a) officials and agents of jagirdars;
- b) permanent local officials many of whom were hereditary. They were generally not affected by the frequent transfers of the jagirdars, and
- c) imperial officials to help and control the jagirdars

At the rural level, there were many revenue officials:

- i) **Karori:** In 1574-75, the office of karori was created. Describing his duties, Abul Fazl says that he was incharge of both assessment and collection of the revenue. An important change took place during Shah Jahan's reign. Now amins were appointed in every mahal and they were given the work of assessment. After this change, karori (or amil) remained concerned chiefly with collection of revenue which amin had assessed.

The karori was appointed by the diwan of the province. He was expected to look after the interests of the peasantry. The accounts of the actual collection of the karoris and their agents were audited with the help of the village patwari's papers.

- ii) **Amin:** The next important revenue official was amin. As we have already mentioned, that the office of amin was created during Shah Jahan's reign. His main function was to assess the revenue. He, too, was appointed by the diwan. He was responsible jointly with the karori and faujdar for the safe transit of the collected revenue. The faujdar of the province kept a vigilant eye on the activities of amin and karori. He also used to recommend their promotion.
- iii) **Qanungo:** He was the local revenue official of the pargana, and generally belonged to one of the accountant castes. It was a hereditary post, but an imperial order was essential for the nomination of each new person.

Nigarnama-i Munshi holds qanungos responsible for malpractices because "they have no fear of being transferred or deposed." But a qanungo could be removed by an imperial order if he indulged in malpractices, or on account of negligence of duty. He was supposed to maintain records concerning revenue receipts, area statistics, local revenue rates and practices and customs of the pargana. It was generally believed that if a qanungo was asked to produce the revenue records for the previous hundred years, he should be able to do so.

The jagirdar's agents were generally unfamiliar with the locality; they usually depended heavily on the information supplied to them by the qanungos.

The qanungo was paid 1% of the total revenue as remuneration, but Akbar started paying them salary.

- iv) **Chaudhari:** He was also an important revenue official like the qanungo. In most cases he was the leading zamindar of the locality. He was mainly concerned with the collection. He also stood surety for the lesser zamindars.

The chaudhari distributed and stood surety for the repayment of the taqavi loans. He was a countercheck on qanungo.

From Dastur-ul Amal Alamgiri it appears that the allowance to the chaudhari was not very substantial. But it is possible that he held extensive revenue free (inam) lands.

- v) **Shiqqdar:** Under Sher Shah, he was the incharge of revenue collection and maintained law and order. In Akbar's later period, he seems to be a subordinate official under the karori. Abul Fazl mentions that in case of an emergency, the shiqqdar could give the necessary sanction for disbursement which was to be duly reported to the court. He was also responsible for thefts that occurred in his jurisdiction.
- vi) **Muqaddam and Patwari:** The muqaddam and patwari were village level officials. The former was the village headman. In lieu of his services, he was allowed 2.5 percent of the total revenue collected by him. The patwari was to maintain

records of the village land, the holdings of the individual cultivators, variety of crops grown and details about fallow land. The names of the cultivators were entered in his **bahi** (ledger). On the basis of information contained in these **bahis**, the **bitikchi** used to prepare necessary papers and records according to which assessment and collection was carried out.

In each **pargana**, there were two other officials—the **fotadar** or **khazandar** (the treasurer), and **karkun** or **bitikchi** (the accountant). Under Sher Shah, there were two **karkuns**, one for keeping the records in Hindi and the other in Persian. But in A.D. 1583-84 Persian was made the sole language for accounts.

The **faujdar** represented the military or policy power of the imperial government. One of his main duties was to help the **jagirdar** or **amil** in collecting revenue from the **zortalab** (refractory) **zamindars** and peasants.

There were **waqai navis**, **sawanih nigar** (news writers), etc., whose duty was to report the cases of irregularities and oppression to the centre.

### Check Your Progress 3

1) Describe the duties and functions of a **karori**.

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2) Define the following:

i) **Zortalab-Zamindars:**

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ii) **Fotadar**

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iii) **Waqai Navis**

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## 16.8 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit, we have discussed the central features of the agrarian system under the Mughals. The land revenue was the main source of the state's income. The British administrators regarded it as rent of the soil, and thought that the owner of the land was the king, but subsequent studies have shown that it was a tax on the crop rather than on land.

The salient features of the Mughal land revenue system may be summarised as follows:

- a) The magnitude of land-revenue demand varied from region to region;
- b) A number of methods were used to assess the land revenue demand. Though **zabti** was the most important method of revenue assessment, other methods, like **ghalla bakhshi**, and **kankut** were also prevalent.
- c) The special feature was that in most cases (at least in the **zabti** provinces),

revenue was realized in cash, thereby giving impetus to monetization and market economy.

- d) Relief was provided at the time of natural calamity. The state used to give concessions in the form of **nabud**, and advanced loans called **taqavi**, and,
- e) A large number of officials were associated with the administration of land revenue. Some of the important functionaries were **karori**, **amin**, **qanungo**, **chaudhuri**, **shiqqdar**, **fotadar**, **bitikchi**, **diwan**, **faujdar**, **waqai navis sawanih nigar**, etc.

## 16.9 KEY WORDS

<b>Bahi</b>	:	record book; accounts-book; ledger
<b>Maurusi</b>	:	hereditary
<b>Raiyat</b>	:	peasant
<b>Jama</b>	:	assessed revenue
<b>Hasil</b>	:	actual collection
<b>Qabuliat</b>	:	acceptance
<b>Nabud</b>	:	not-existing
<b>Patta</b>	:	a written document issued by the revenue department to the peasants in which the rate of revenue demand, etc., were entered.
<b>Taqavi</b>	:	agricultural loan
<b>Zortalab</b>	:	refractory

## 16.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sec. 16.2
- 2) See Sec. 16.2. At first-define zabti system. Trace its origin and then discuss its merits and demerits.
- 3) See Sec. 16.3. Analyse that in Mughal India revenue demand was not uniformly imposed. Discuss how it varies from region to region.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sec. 16.4
- 2) See Sec. 16.6. Write the nature of the relief measures. What type of loans were given? What was **taqavi** loan; why it was given and on what condition? Who were the officials involved in the distribution of these loans, etc.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sec. 16.7 (i). Analyse why Akbar created the office of **karori**? What powers were entrusted upon him at that time. What changes were made during the succeeding reigns in his powers and functions.
- 2) See Sec. 16.7 (vi).



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# UNIT 17 AGRARIAN RELATIONS: MUGHAL INDIA

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## Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Revenue Assignees and Grantees
- 17.3 The Zamindars
  - 17.3.1 Zamindari Rights
  - 17.3.2 Military Strength of Zamindars
  - 17.3.3 Chaudhuris
  - 17.3.4 Other Intermediaries
- 17.4 Peasantry
  - 17.4.1 Land Rights of Peasantry
  - 17.4.2 Stratification of Peasantry
  - 17.4.3 Village Community
- 17.5 Relations between Agrarian Classes
- 17.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 17.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit, we will discuss the agrarian relations in Mughal India. After reading this Unit you will know about:

- the various classes who appropriated a share in the produce of the land;
- the **zamindars** and their rights;
- various categories of peasants and the village community;
- other intermediaries who enjoyed a share in the surplus produce; and
- the relations between various agrarian classes.

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## 17.1 INTRODUCTION

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A large part of the agricultural surplus was alienated in the form of land revenue. Theoretically, the Emperor was the sole claimant as discussed in Unit 16. However, in actual practice, apart from the state and its agents, a number of intermediaries also took away huge amounts through various channels. In this Unit we will discuss the rights of various classes to land and its produce. We will also discuss the interrelationship between these classes.

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## 17.2 REVENUE ASSIGNEES AND GRANTEES

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The state adopted two ways to realise the land revenue from the peasants. First, the **jagirdars** were assigned certain areas with rights to collect revenue and utilise the same for their salary and to meet their military obligations. Secondly, it collected revenue through imperial revenue officers from the **khalisa**. The **jagirdar** had no permanent rights over the areas so assigned due to frequent transfers. His claims were confined to the authorised land revenue and other taxes.

While the **jagirdars** were given revenue assignments in lieu of cash salary, there was another category of people which was given revenue grants for their subsistence. This was the class of religious men who were patronised by the state.

These grants were known as **suyurghal** or **madad-i maash** (aid for subsistence). A separate department under the charge of the **sadr us sudur** looked after these grants. If the aid was given in cash, it was known as **wazifa**. There were certain categories of people who were qualified to receive **madad-i maash**. These grants did not invest the grantee with any right over land but were entitled to the prescribed revenue from its produce. Akbar put the ceiling of such grants of land to 100 **bighas** per person. The policy of Akbar was to grant half cultivable and half waste land to improve agriculture.

The grant was for the lifetime of the grantee and the heirs could apply for a renewal. Generally only a part of the grant was allowed to heirs. Jahangir confirmed all the grants made by Akbar while Shah Jahan began to examine all grants given during the previous reigns. He allowed 30 **bighas** to be inherited, Aurangzeb reduced it to 20 **bighas**. In the 30th year of his reign, he allowed the grant to be entirely hereditary, by calling such grants as loan ('**ariyat**') and not property. In the latter part of his reign as well as after his death, the grantees started enjoying the right to sell or transfer the land, which, then, acquired the characteristics of a **zamindari**.

In Akbar's period, it was found that the revenue of such grants would not be over 5.84% of the total **jama**. The mapping of these grants shows that most of these were concentrated in the upper Gangetic provinces (highest in Delhi and Allahabad). It appears that no change had taken place in the proportion of the revenue alienated through the grants till the early years of Muhammad Shah. The mapping, also show that these grants were mainly in the urban areas. We find that over 70% of the **suyurghal** lay in the **parganas** which were under the control of the non-Muslim **zamindars**.

Another type of grant (**waqf**) was given to institutions, etc. Revenues of certain lands were permanently assigned for the maintenance of religious tombs, shrines, **madrassas**, etc. Such grants could be given by the **jagirdars** also, and lasted till the term of the **jagirdar** in that area.

The **madad-i maash** grants were intended to create pockets of influence and to develop waste lands. Generally, these were given to Shaikhs and Sayyids and other men of learning. In emergency they joined the government forces to curb local disturbances. The total revenue alienated in such grants was not large. There was a tendency on the part of the grantees to acquire **zamindari** rights in their area and elsewhere. Thus, some of them transformed themselves into small **zamindars**. By the first half of the 18th century, these grants were treated as **zamindari** land in all transactions.

### Check Your Progress 1

1) What do you understand by revenue assignments?

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2) What were land grants? Who received these grants?

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## 17.3 THE ZAMINDARS

The **zamindars** were present in practically every part of the Mughal Empire and held the most significant position in the agrarian structure of Mughal India. The word **zamindar** is derived from two Persian words—**zamin** (land) and **dar** (holder). During the pre-Mughal period, the word **zamindar** has been used in the sense of the chief of a territory. The fact that a chief had acknowledged the supremacy of a superior sovereign power made no difference to his position within his own domain, so long as he was allowed to retain it. From Akbar's time onwards, this term was officially used for any person with any hereditary claim to a direct share in the peasant's produce. The early local terms such as **khot** and **muqaddam** in the Doab, **satarahi** and **biawi** in Awadh, **bhoml** in Rajasthan and **banth** or **vanth** in Gujarat were replaced by the term **zamindar**. However, many of these terms continued to be used interchangeably with **zamindars** in contemporary accounts. The areas without **zamindars** were termed **raliyati** (peasant held).

Nurul Haran divides the **zamindars** into three categories.

- a) Primary **zamindars** who had some proprietary rights over the land;
- b) Secondary **zamindars** who held the intermediary rights and helped the state in collecting land revenue; and
- c) Autonomous chiefs—had autonomous rights in their territories and paid a fixed amount to the Mughal State.

### 17.3.1 Zamindari Rights

**Zamindari** did not signify a proprietary right in land. It was a claim on the produce of the soil, co-existing in a subordinate capacity, with the land revenue demand of the state. Yet, like any article of private property, it could, and was, freely bought and sold. It was also inheritable and divisible, that is, the heirs of a **zamindar** could divide the fiscal claims and perquisites of their inherited **zamindari**, in accordance with the law of the land.

The **zamindar** acquired his rights by virtue of the historical tradition of control he and his kinsmen exercised over the inhabitants of particular villages. At some time, the **zamindars** had settled villages and distributed its land among the peasantry. In eastern Rajasthan, **wasidar** (a category of peasants) were settled by the **bhomia** (**zamindar** as known there) in the village to undertake sometimes the cultivation of his personal lands. The **zamindari** rights, therefore, were not created by the ruling classes, but preceded them. The king, however, could create **zamindari** in villages where none existed. He could also dislodge a **zamindar**, but this was a right he exercised only in case of sedition or non-payment of revenue.

The medieval rulers recognised the rights of the **zamindars**, but were equally insistent on treating them as agents of the government for revenue collection. When the **zamindari** took this form, that is, it came to assist the government in the collection of revenue, for the service (**khlidmat**) so rendered, the **zamindar** was entitled to a percentage of the total revenue collected. This percentage in official documents is stated to be 10% and is described as **nankar** ("allowance"). When the administration decided to collect the revenue through its own agents, by-passing the **zamindar**, the latter was entitled to a share in the collection of revenues called **malikana** (proprietary right), and like **nankar**, was fixed at 10% of the total revenue collected.

In Gujarat, this claim of the **zamindar** was described as **banth** or **vanth**, but unlike **malikana** in Northern India, it was considerably higher. Like **malikana**, it was paid in the form of cash. In the Deccan, it was called **chauth** (lit. "one fourth"), and as the name suggests, stood at one-fourth of the revenues collected. **Sardeshmukhi**, another fiscal claim of the **zamindar** in the Deccan, was equivalent to 10% of the revenues. Under the Marathas, the cesses of **chauth** and **sardeshmukhi** came to be realised not through a legal claim based on actual **zamindari** right, but by the sheer use of force. Under Shivaji, while the claim of the king comprised one-fourth of the **chauth** and the whole of **surdeshmukhi**, the other three-fourths of the **chauth** was to be retained by the Maratha feudatory barons.

Besides their principal fiscal claim, the **zamindars** also exacted a number of petty

perquisites from the peasantry. Some of the well-known cesses so realised were (**dastar shumari**) (turban tax), house tax (**khana shumari**), cesses on marriage and birth, etc. The **zamindars** used to collect taxes from weekly markets also in their areas. At times, they are found collecting toll tax on merchandise passing through their territories. The amount that the **zamindars** realised through these petty perquisites is quite difficult to estimate; in all probability, in relation to their principal fiscal claim, it was not quite considerable.

We have so far been discussing about the primary and intermediary **zamindars**, that is, those who resided in the directly administered territories, and of whom the administration was anxious that they be reduced to the status of mere 'rent-gatherers'. Apart from them, there were chiefs or chieftains—the **rajas, raos, ranas** and **rawatas**—who were more or less autonomous in their estates, governing them without any interference from the imperial administration (see Unit 6). Their obligation to the king did not go beyond paying him a fixed amount as tribute (**peshkash**). Their share in the surplus produce of the peasant, therefore, amounted to the difference between what they collected from the peasants and what they paid to the king as **peshkash**. The Imperial administration recognised their semi-autonomous status, and exercised no control over their internal administration once they had paid the usual **peshkash**. According to Irfan Habib, the difference between the **zamindars** and autonomous chiefs "lay most clearly in the relationship with the imperial power which allowed autonomy to the chiefs, but made ordinary **zamindar** mere propertied subjects of the Emperor".

### 17.3.2 Military Strength of Zamindars

The **zamindars** employed their footmen and cavalry. These troops helped them in the realisation of land revenue and subjugation of peasantry. Almost all **zamindars** had their own small or big **qilachas/garhi** or forts. According to the **Ain-i Akbari**, the troops of the **zamindars** in the whole Mughal Empire exceeded forty four lakhs. In Bengal they possessed thousands of boats.

### 17.3.3 Chaudhuris

As mentioned earlier, the **zamindar** played a prominent role in the collection of land revenue. Some of these **zamindars** were designated as **chaudhuri** for the purpose of collection of revenue. One of the prominent **zamindars** of a **pargana** was appointed **chaudhuri**, generally one in each **pargana**.

The **chaudhuri** was suppose to collect the revenue from other **zamindars** of the **pargana**. Apart from thier customary **nankar**, these **chaudhuris** were entitled to another share in the land revenue collected by them. This was termed **chaudhurai** which amounted to two and a half per cent of the revenue collected. Unlike the **zamindar**, the **chaudhuri** was appointed by the state and could be removed for improper functioning.

### 17.3.4 Other Intermediaries

Each village had a number of hereditary officials. The most important of them was the village headman (**muqaddam** in Northern India and **patel** in the Deccan). He was the person responsible for the collection of land revenue and maintenance of law and order in the villages. For the services so rendered, he was granted a part of the village land revenue-free, though, in some cases, he was also remunerated in cash at a percentage of total land revenue realised. In addition, he was also entitled to receive some amount of produce from peasants. In the task of the collection of land revenue the **muqaddam** was assisted by the village accountant (**patwari** in Northern India and **kulkarni** in the Deccan). The **patwari's** task was to maintain a record (**bahi**) of the revenue collected from the individual peasants and its payment to the state authorities. His records, therefore, were of immense help to the administration in assessing the revenue-paying capacity of the peasants and in fixing the total land revenue claim on the village. Like the **muqaddam** he was also remunerated by the grant of revenue-free land or by a fixed commission in the total revenue collected. However, being an employee of the village organisation, his allowance was much smaller than that of the village headman. The office and the accompanying privileges of both the **muqaddam** and **patwari** were hereditary.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Describe briefly the nature of zamindari rights?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

2) Write three lines on each of the following:

i) Chaudhuris .....

.....  
 .....

ii) Muqaddam .....

.....  
 .....

## 17.4 PEASANTRY

In the earlier sections, we studied about the classes who enjoyed superior rights over the produce of the land. In this section we will discuss the main producing classes.

The main agrarian class, directly involved with the agricultural production, was the peasantry. Though the class had a number of strata within it, for the convenience of study we are including all of them under one nomenclature.

The peasants constituted the primary class in rural society and the revenue collected from them sustained the whole state apparatus. We have noticed in Unit 16 that the peasant had to pay a large part of their produce as land revenue. It appears that the bulk of the peasantry lived on the subsistence level of existence.

### 17.4.1 Land Rights of Peasantry

There has been a long debate among historians regarding the rights of the peasantry over land. Peasant's claim to land was not disregarded by the state, yet he was never allowed the right to free alienation. It appears that peasants had all the rights over land as long as he cultivated it. The zamindars or state had no right to evict the peasant as long as he cultivated the land and paid the revenue. It seems that proprietary rights in land were not quite developed during the Mughal period. However, the most important aspect of the period is the varying claims over the produce of the land.

In contemporary accounts we come across a number of references to the flight of the peasantry from villages because of oppression or other problems. A number of instances are available about peasants settling individually or in groups in various regions. The mobility of the peasant was an established practice in Mughal India. This mobility was more pronounced in cases of their oppression in one region or natural calamities like floods and famines.

### 17.4.2 Stratification of Peasantry

The peasantry was not a homogenous class. The stratification was due to inequalities in wealth and social status. Peasants with large resources cultivated bigger plots of land, and even employed labourers on his fields. They could acquire head-ship of a village (**muqaddam** or **patel**) and enjoy a superior share in the produce of other peasants. The divisions were so well-established that they are differently designated even in official accounts and records. Richer peasants are referred to as **khudkasht** (self-cultivated) in Northern India, **gharughalas** in Rajasthan and **mirasdars** in Maharashtra. The poor peasants are referred to as **reza ria'ya** (small peasant) in Northern India, **paltis** in Rajasthan and **kumbh** in Maharashtra.

The major reason for this can be found in the wide prevalence of cash-nexus. Since land revenue in the larger part of India had to be paid in cash, peasants and cultivators were forced to carry their produce to the markets or sell it to merchants or moneylenders on the eve of harvest. In such a situation, those peasants who could cultivate cash crops would be placed in a better position, because of the higher prices they fetched in the market than those who, owing to their scarce resources, could only cultivate food crops for which the prices were comparatively low. Not all peasants could shift to cash crop cultivation since it involved much expenses (good seeds, better fertilisers, irrigation or facilities, and also more productive soil). The requirement of the payment of land revenue in cash would thus cause a widening gulf between the relatively better-off peasants whose resources allowed them to shift to cash crop cultivation and the poor peasants who found even the cultivation of food crops an arduous and expensive business. The regressive nature of land revenue demand was another major factor that caused and intensified divisions within the peasantry. The incidence of land revenue demand being uniform for both the rich and the poor peasants, in actual fact it fell more heavily on the latter than on the former. The village organisation, or what has often loosely been described as the "village community", further perpetuated these divisions by levying lower revenue rates on the **khudkasht** peasants, and calling upon the **reza ri'aya** to meet the deficit thus arising in the total revenue claim.

- Economic inequalities were not the only basis of divisions within the peasantry. They were also divided between the permanent residents of the village (**Khudkasht** Northern India, **mirasdar** in Maharashtra and **thalvaik** or **thalkar** in Deccan) and the temporary residents (**pai 'kasht** in Northern India; **upari** in Maharashtra). Caste associations and kinship ties (**bhainchara**), even as they served as linkages that afforded supra-local affinities were also at the same time sources of divisiveness.

Below the class of peasants existed in rural India a large population of menial workers. Their number or their proportion to caste peasantry is almost impossible to estimate, yet, in all probability, they did constitute a significant portion of the rural population of India. They are described in the contemporary literature as **chamars**, **balahars**, **thoris** and **dhanuks**, etc. They were a cheap source of labour for the peasants and **zamindars** to work on their fields during the sowing and harvest seasons. It was, therefore, in the interest of both of them (i.e., the peasants and **zamindars**) to suppress and exploit them. The creation of a huge reserve of labour force for agricultural production reduced the cost of production, which enhanced the "surplus" produce of the peasant, and thus allowed a greater exploitation of land revenue by the ruling power. In the suppression of the menial workers, the state, the **zamindars** and the peasants were equal collaborators.

### 17.4.3 Village Community

Generally the peasants of a village had a majority of the same caste. Such villages were established historically by one clan or family. Apart from the peasants of the dominant caste of a village, there were menial workers who came from lower castes. From the contemporary accounts it appears that in many activities these villages functioned as a community. It should not be taken to mean that there were any communal land holdings. The fields were definitely held by individual peasants. The revenue officials found it convenient to treat village as a unit for revenue assessment and collection. The description of the **patwari** as a village official supports this. It is reported that the **patwari** was supposed to keep the account of individual peasants production and revenue liability. The payment to state was made by the village as a unit. The revenue from the individual peasants was put in a pool whose incharge was the **patwari**. From this pool, land revenue, fees and perquisites of certain officials and sundry common expenses of the village were paid. Even the loan taken from the moneylenders was paid back out of the village pool.

The dominant group of people in a village constituted the village **panchayat**. The latter used to decide village affairs regarding dispute over land rights, disposal of waste land, etc. It was also responsible to the state for arresting criminals, compensating for the value of goods stolen or tracing them. These **panchayats** were not above the state. The latter allowed it to discharge its traditional role in the village society only if its activities were not hampering the basic interests of the state.

Some social groups in the village were not directly involved in the agrarian production, but they played some rôle in the agrarian activities. The **mahajans** acted as middlemen between the state and peasants and had considerable control over the rural society and economy. They would advance loans to individual peasants and village collectively for buying seeds and equipments or pay revenue or for social needs.

The village had artisans attached to it to provide their services and were paid at the harvest. The system was very well organised in Deccan and Maharashtra. These were called **balutedars**. We will discuss about them in some detail in Unit 19. The system of village community, **panchayats** or **balutedars** was not uniformly applicable to all the villages of the Mughal Empire. There were different types of structures in different regions. Most villages had some sort of community structure, though varying in degrees of control on their members.

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## 17.5 RELATIONS BETWEEN AGRARIAN CLASSES

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In the earlier sections of this Unit, we studied about various agrarian classes. We noticed that a number of groups appropriated a share in the surplus of the produce, i.e., **jagirdars**, religious grantees, **zamindars** and various intermediaries at the village level. We have also studied about the producing class or peasantry. Here, in this section, we will study the relations between these classes.

Both the **zamindars** and the **jagirdars** fed upon the surplus produce of the peasant, and therefore, insofar as the exploitation of the peasantry was concerned, both acted as each other's collaborators. Yet, the **zamindar**, being permanently based would not allow exploitation that went beyond the alienation of surplus produce, for that would lead to exodus of the peasantry and desertion of agricultural operations which would in turn affect his own fiscal claims during the following year. The **jagirdars**, attitude is best reflected in Bernier's account who visited India in the mid-17th century. He writes that, because of the frequent transfers of **jagirs** the **jagirdars**, governors and revenue contractors were not bothered about the deplorable state of peasantry. They therefore were interested in exploiting the peasantry to the maximum even at the cost of their desertion and fields lying unattended.

Jawahar Mal Bekas, an 18th century writer observes that the **hakim (jagirdar)** of a day can in a moment remove a **zamindar** of five hundred years, and put in his stead a man who has been without a place for a life-time. Irfan Habib further elaborates his powers and writes that "as for peasants, the **jagirdars** claimed powers to detain them on the land, like serfs, and bring them back, if they ran away." In the second half of the 17th century due to the uncertainty of holding a **jagir** for a stipulated period, the **jagirdars** oppressed peasants. They had no regard for their welfare. According to Irfan Habib, "While undoubtedly the Mughal administration sought to take measures to regulate and moderate the **jagirdars'** exactions, it is not certain that these could reduce the pressure for short-term maximization of revenue by individual **jagirdars**. Such pressure not only inhibited extension of cultivation, but also involved the Mughal ruling class in a deepening conflict with the two major agrarian classes, the **zamindars** and the peasantry".

The divisions within the peasantry, as also the deep contractions that existed between the peasants and agricultural workers, acted as severe constraints and weakened the capabilities of this class. Disjointed and truncated, this class was quite incapable of confronting the medieval despotic states. It did, however, revolt for two reasons: one, when the revenue demand appropriated more than the surplus produce of the peasants, thereby threatening their very subsistence. Peasant revolts in these circumstances never went beyond asking for a reduction in revenue demand. Peasants also revolted as followers of a **zamindar** who was leading a revolt against the state or **jagirdar** (mostly on the question of his claim to the produce of the soil), either in the hope that the end of revolt would lead to better conditions of living for them or simply as rendering a service to their overlord. Peasant revolts of this nature were actually **zamindari** revolts: the **zamindars** led them and the peasants served the purposes of the **zamindars** alone. We shall be discussing these **zamindar**-led peasant revolt in a separate Unit.

1) Give a brief account of various categories of peasants.

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 .....  
 .....

2) How did the village community function?

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 .....  
 .....

3) Discuss the clash of interests between the jagirdar and zamindar?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

## 17.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we studied that

- on behalf of the state, the jagirdar appropriated a major share in the agricultural surplus;
- the revenue grantees enjoyed revenue-free lands granted to them by the state;
- the zamindar was not the owner of the land but had hereditary rights in the produce of soil. These rights were salable;
- when the zamindar collected revenue for the state, he was entitled to nankar. When the state directly collected the revenue, the zamindar was paid a share called malikana. The zamindars were entitled to a number of other petty perquisites;
- the zamindars maintained troops;
- caste and kinship ties divided the zamindars and prevented its growth as the governing class of India;
- village headman and other officials also appropriated a part of agrarian surplus;
- the peasants had to pay larger part of his produce to the state, zamindar and other intermediaries;
- the peasantry was not a homogenous group but was divided on the basis of their income and holdings. Kinship and caste ties also divided them;
- landless peasants or village menial workers were the most oppressed class in the agrarian society; and
- there was a serious clash of interests between the jagirdar and zamindar. In case of conflicts between the two, the peasants were generally on the side of the zamindars and suffered most in these clashes.

## 17.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec. 17.2



2) See Sec. 17.2

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) **Zamindar's** rights were over the produce of the land for details see Sub-sec. 17.3.1
- 2) See Sub-sec. 17.3.3 and 17.3.4

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) **Peasants** can be divided into a number of categories on the basis of their land holdings, resources and nature of rights see Sub-sec. 17.4.2
- 2) The common body of residents in a village worked as village community. See Sub-sec. 17.4.3
- 3) The **zamindars** had permanent interests in their areas while **jagirdars** were transferable. The latter were interested in the maximum exploitation of peasantry while **zamindars** were scared of the desertion of land by peasantry and loosing their share of the revenue. See Sec. 17.5



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# UNIT 18 LAND REVENUE SYSTEM: MARATHAS, DECCAN AND SOUTH INDIA

## Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Revenue System: Marathas and the Deccan States
  - 18.2.1 Mode of Assessment
  - 18.2.2 Incidence of Revenue Demand
  - 18.2.3 Revenue Collection
  - 18.2.4 Revenue Farming
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- 18.3 Taxes Other Than Land Revenue
- 18.4 Land Revenue System: South India
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  - 18.4.2 Malabar States
  - 18.4.3 Taxes Other Than Land Revenue
- 18.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.6 Key Words
- 18.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

## 18.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the system of revenue assessment of the Deccan and South India;
- the state's share in the surplus and how it was extracted;
- the role of revenue farmers in the collection process;
- the relationship of tributary chieftains with the king;
- the revenue resources of the Deccan and South Indian States other than land tax, and
- the nature of land revenue and relationship of the state with the peasants.

## 18.1 INTRODUCTION

You have read in Units 3, 9 and 12 of **this course** about the political formations of the Deccan and the South Indian states. **The rise of the Marathas** and their relations with the Mughals has been discussed in Unit 10. **Before proceeding** to the actual working of the land revenue system of the Deccan and the South Indian states, let us acquaint you with the land structure and the administrative divisions of the Deccan and the South Indian states. (A detailed survey of agrarian relations will be dealt with in Unit 19 of this Block). The entire land was divided into three parts (i) state land known as **khalisa**, **bhandaravada** or **muamala**; (ii) land granted to the military commanders for the maintenance of troops (**amara**, **moqasas**) while the land allotted to the officials in lieu of their salaries was known as **jagirs** and **saranjams**; and (iii) revenue-free land grants (**manya**, **inam**). Peasant holdings were known as **miras** and peasant rights as **mirasi** rights. Land under direct management of the state was placed in the charge of **moqasadars** who could be transferred at king's will, but generally held the post for long and even, at times, were succeeded by their sons. The

peasant was the owner of land. Instances of communal ownership also existed. Some land (mostly waste) also belonged to the entire village with the **panchayat** as its custodian. The lowest unit of assessment was **mauza** (village). Group of villages formed **mahal** (for revenue purposes), **tarf**, **tapa**, **qaryat**. A number of **parganas** constituted a **suba** (prant, province). Shivaji's empire consisted of three **prants** headed by **sarsubedar**.

With this background, let us move to the actual working of the land revenue system in the Deccan and South India.

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## 18.2 REVENUE SYSTEM: MARATHAS AND THE DECCAN STATES

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The land revenue system of the Deccan states owes much to Malik Ambar—the Nizam Shahi Prime Minister. It was he who for the first time adopted the most scientific methodology to assess and collect the revenue. He, in turn, was influenced by Todar Mal's regulations. All the Deccan states (Bijapur, Golkunda and Ahmednagar), including the Marathas, copied his regulations with minor modifications.

### 18.2.1 Mode of Assessment

Under Malik Ambar, it was based on the assessment of actual area under cultivation and the cash value of the crop produced. But he actually did not order for the survey of the land and the assessment was done not by actual measurement but by observation. Assessment was done with the help of hereditary village officials—**deshmukhs** and **patils**.

But Shivaji paid foremost attention to the measurement of land. Seeing the inaccuracy of rope (which was liable to variations in different seasons), Shivaji substituted it by a **kathi** (a measuring rod). Twenty **kathis** constituted a **bigha** and 120 **bighas** a **chavar**. But local variations in the **bigha** size existed.

Annaji Datto was entrusted the task of systematic assessment in 1678. Annaji also took the help of **pargana** and village officials for this survey work. But he did not rely wholly on those officials. To counteract and check their assessment, he himself did the spot assessment of one hilly, one marshy and one black soil area within a **tapa**. In many cases he made 25 to 100 per cent enhancements over the assessments of local officials. Besides, the villagers were also consulted regarding the assessment of their holdings.

Malik Ambar classified the land broadly into two categories: **baghayat** (garden land) and **zirayat** (cultivated land). The latter was further divided into four categories. In Shivaji's time this member increased to twelve. Waste land was generally excluded from the assessment. But, when the pressure on land increased, more and more cultivable waste land was brought under cultivation. Malik Ambar followed the system of progressive assessment for the assessment of these new reclaimed lands. In the Nizam Shahi dominions when such land was reclaimed, no revenue was imposed for the first two years, but from the third year onwards, the state started claiming small share in the produce. In the 8th year revenue was claimed at the full rate. However, under the Marathas land tax was imposed from the very first year. Every year its rate was gradually enhanced and finally by the 8th year, it was assessed at full rate. Under the Marathas, sometimes these lands were assessed by the number of ploughs (**hal**) and not by the **bigha**. Sometimes, even 6-7 **bighas** were assessed as one **bigha** for revenue purpose. Revenue assessment also varied on the basis of the fertility of the soil. It was also assessed at various rates on the basis of the nature of the crops sown, e.g., sugarcane, pulses, cotton, etc. Even when the second crop was sown (other than the principal one), it was assessed at a lower rate. According to the fertility of the soil and the estimated produce, the demand was fixed once for all. Assessment was done on individual peasants separately, but for the realization purpose the entire village was treated as a single unit.

Adil Shahi rulers of Bijapur also seem to have followed the same methods of

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Define the following:

a) **Kathi:** .....  
 .....  
 .....

b) **Progressive Assessment:**  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

2) Discuss Annaji Datto's contribution to the revenue system.

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 .....  
 .....  
 .....

**18.2.2 Incidence of Revenue Demand**

Malik Ambar claimed 2/5th of the produce as state share in kind which, when converted into cash demand amounted to 1/3 of the total value of the crop. The same amount was claimed by the Marathas, too. However, when Shivaji abolished other cesses, a consolidated share of 40 per cent was claimed by the state.

In some Maratha tracts—Paumaval (1676) and Rohidkhore (1676)—*batai* was the prevalent form of assessment. Here, the state's claim amounted to 1/2 of the produce. Malik Ambar's system of assessment by observation was also followed in the Maratha tracts for the assessment of land of inferior quality.

In the kingdoms of Golkunda and Bijapur revenue demand was one half of the produce which seems to be quite high. Revenue demand as well as realization was generally made both in cash and in kind. For gardenlands revenue was always imposed in cash. In Golkunda revenue was generally collected in cash.

**18.2.3 Revenue Collection**

After the state demand was fixed an annual estimate of revenue was made which was called *jamsbandi*. From this estimated revenue a deduction for revenue free lands (*inam*) was made. Dues of the state officials were also deducted from the total revenue demand. Revenue was collected twice a year after *rabi* (May) and *Khari* (October) harvests.

There was a long chain of officials to assist the state in the collection of land revenue. Here we will be discussing very briefly powers and functions of these officials. Their role in the village community will be dealt in detail in Unit 19 of this Block.

**Village level officials:** The village headman (*muqaddam, patel*) was responsible for the collection of revenue. He was assisted by a *kulkarni* who was a village accountant.

**Tapa and pargana level officials:** At *tapa* level, *deshmukh* or *desai* was responsible for revenue collection. He was assisted by *karkuns* (clerks). He maintained an armed body of retainers for revenue collection. In lieu of his services he was entitled for 5 percent of the revenue collected. Besides, he also controlled revenue-free and hereditary lands. He was assisted in his work by *deshpande* or *deshkulkarni* who was

the record keeper-cum-accountant. He kept complete records of taxes, area under cultivation, crops sown, etc. for which he was entitled to a fixed percent of share in the revenue. But his share was comparatively lower than those of the *deshmukhs*. He was also entitled for revenue-free lands. His post was hereditary. In most cases, this post was held by *brahmins*.

In Golkunda, the *havaladar* was responsible for the collection of revenue at the *pargana* level. This office was auctioned and given to the highest bidder. Though *sarsimt* (incharge of *simt/tarf*) was to keep watch over his actions, he practically acted at will. His main function was to collect the revenue and pay to the centre the stipulated amount at stipulated time. In most cases he was a *bania* or *brahmin*.

In the Nizamshahi dominion, these revenue officials were largely *brahmins*. To keep a check on them, they were placed under the supervision of Muslim officers.

In the Adil Shahi kingdom, the office of *amir jumla* headed by the *wakil* was incharge of the revenue administration. At the *sarkar* level, the *subedar* was responsible for the collection of land revenue.

Jadunath Sarkar has argued that Shivaji totally did away with the intermediaries—*zamindars*, *deshmukhs*, *desais*, *patils*, etc. But Satish Chandra is of the opinion that Shivaji only curtailed the unlimited powers of these hereditary officials. He appointed his own officials to visit and supervise the collection of revenue. They were asked to refrain from extracting more than their due share failing which severe punishments were given.

Under the Peshwas, the *sarsubedar* exercised wide powers in revenue matters. He fixed the remuneration of the *kamavisdars* etc; he had the right to increase or decrease the *rasad* (advance payment of the *kamavisdars*), granted remissions and even had the right to appoint or dismiss *phadnis*. The *mamlatdars* and *kamavisdars* played important role in revenue collection under the Peshwas. He was the Peshwa's representative in the *parganas* (same powers were enjoyed by the *havaladar* in Golkunda). Their duty was to collect revenue from the *parganas* and its villages and pay it to the centre. Generally, certain number of *parganas* were farmed out to them. The state received a fixed sum of money called *rasad* (advance payment) from them. The *deshmukhs* and *muqaddams/patel* of the village and *simts* were asked to make over the revenue collection to them.

In certain cases, the *sarsubedar* could appoint the *mamlatdar* with the approval of the centre. In such cases, the *mamlatdar* was required to pay the revenue to the *sarsubedar* and not to the centre directly. They were asked to refrain from taking more than the fixed share.

Interestingly, sometimes they were assigned the *kamavis* of particular territories lying outside the state. They were asked to conquer the territory themselves. In such cases they were asked to maintain troops. These troops were paid out of the revenues of that territory and not by the centre. They were paid lucrative salaries. Along with their salaries they were also paid maintenance allowance for a palanquin, a torch-bearer, a batman and an *afagira*. To check their powers, the state directly appointed *mazumdar* (to check the daily accounts) and *phadnis* who wrote the daily book. They were directly responsible to the state. The *amin* was appointed to punish the corrupt ones. A separate official—*daftardar*—prepared the annual estimates of receipts and expenditure of the *mahals*. The *Kamavisdars'* accounts were regularly audited by the officers specially appointed by the centre.

#### 18.2.4 Revenue Farming

Malik Ambar's system did not provide scope for revenue farmers. He tried to establish direct contact, through the hereditary village officials, with the peasants. Shivaji also followed Malik Ambar and not only totally did away with the practice of farming out land but he also curtailed greatly the powers of the local hereditary revenue officials (*deshmukhs*, *patils* etc). However, later under the Peshwas land was farmed out to the *kamavisdars* in lieu of advance payment. But the farming out of land for the purpose of revenue collection was a fairly common feature of all the Deccan Sultanates. Instead of state collecting the revenue directly through its officials, the right to collect revenue was generally given to the highest bidders who

promised to pay a lump sum to the state treasury. These revenue farmers used to sub-assign their rights and the latter in turn further sub-assigned their rights. This practice of farming out land and its further sub-assignments must have loosened states' direct control over peasants.

The coastal governors of Golkunda to the north of the river Krishna held their posts on farming terms as did the *havalgars* in other parts of the kingdom. They, too, behaved like speculators and sub-assigned their rights further as was the case in other parts of the Deccan states. The central government exercised authority through the *amils*, but they too were interested more in regular payments rather than the welfare of the peasants. In Bijapur also some form of revenue farming existed as early as Yusuf Adil Shah's reign.

### 18.2.5 Tributary Chiefs

In Golkunda, the trans-Godavari tract and the districts of Khammamett and Mustafanagar were held by the tributary chiefs/*rajas* who used to pay regular tribute to the Qutab Shahi rulers, but they were free from the state control in internal matters. After the fall of Vijaynagar, many chieftains formed part of Adil Shahi state. Adil Shahi rulers were also satisfied with tributes only; they hardly interfered in the territories of these chieftains/subdued *rajas*. Adil Shah received about Rs. 30 millions as annual tribute from the Hindu chiefs. But these tributes were not, however, regular. There was a tendency on the part of the chieftains to evade payment at the earliest opportunity.

### 18.2.6 State and the Peasant

Shivaji attempted to take special measures to protect the peasants from the oppressive revenue officials. We have already read how he tried to curtail the power of the *deshmukhs*, *deshpandes*, *patels*, etc. He also abolished all the *cesses* (*abwabs*) to the advantage of the peasants. He appointed even his own state officials who used to visit personally and supervise the collection. Officials were asked to refrain from claiming more than the due share. Sometimes, to encourage the cultivators (who left their holdings) to return and settle down, the revenue officials were asked not to claim their previous arrears. To reclaim the arrears, the cultivators tools and implements were not to be confiscated. Revenue was to be collected in proper season and not at the time of sowing or ploughing or while the crops were still standing. In times of famine, drought and damage of crops, special concessions were given to the peasants. *Taqavis* in the form of cash, seeds and ploughs were distributed among peasants in times of need to be repaid on easy instalments.

But Shivaji's system soon fell into abuse. The increasing powers of the *kamavisdars*, who almost acted as revenue farmers by advancing *rasad* to the Peshwas, destroyed all the advantages of Shivaji's measures.

With his new revenue experiment, Malik Ambar succeeded in protecting the interests of the peasants, promoting agriculture and eliminating the intermediaries as far as possible. But his system carried certain flaws as well. His assessment was not based on actual survey of land (this flaw was later corrected by Shivaji). The practice of estimation by observation was extremely defective because it was neither based on actual yields nor on correct assessment.

The Bijapur and Golkunda rulers believed in farming out the entire revenue which must have provided added powers to the revenue officials. All these revenue officials were generally oppressive and their tendency was to extract as much as they could. The state and its appointed officials were satisfied so long as they were getting regular supply of their due share, without bothering for the welfare of the peasants.

Let us remind you that Mughals imposed their own system of revenue administration in the Deccan states after the establishment of their suzerainty in these areas. Mughals occupied Ahmednagar in 1636 and Bijapur and Golkunda states in 1686 and 1687 respectively. A detailed survey of revenue administration under the Mughals is already discussed in Unit 16 of this Block. Curiously, when the Mughals tried to impose their own system there, there already existed *deshmukhs* and *deshpandes* who had deep-rooted landed interests. When the Mughals tried to impose an alien class, those of the *saranjams*, there emerged conflicting clash of interests.

Each trying to grab the maximum benefits to the disadvantage of the peasants. Emergence of such peculiar features created tension at the village level. You have already read in Unit 17 of this Block about conflicts among various agrarian landed classes and superior rightholders in the Deccan and how ultimately it formed an important component for the destability of the Mughal Empire.

### 18.3 TAXES OTHER THAN LAND REVENUE

Besides land revenue a number of illegal cesses and **abwabs** were paid by peasants. Under the Marathas and the Bijapur kingdom number of such cesses was around 50. Besides, forced labour also prevailed. Shivaji seems to have abolished all illegal cesses.

Custom dues formed an important source of income. But the dues levied on import and export were fairly low. Favours were granted to the European companies. In the Golkunda (Kurnool) and Bijapur (Raichur Doab) kingdoms diamond mining formed important source of state's income. Besides, various taxes were imposed on salt, tobacco, vegetables, tari (fermented juice of date palm), etc. **jiziya**, too, was a source of Adil Shahi income. Income from minting and **peshkash** (tributes) and war booty, etc. also formed important sources of states' income.

#### Chauth and Sardeshmukhi

These two formed the major sources of income for the Marathas. Some have termed it sheer plunder and loot. **Sardeshmukhi** was an exaction of 10 percent imposed upon the revenues of the entire Maratha kingdom. Shivaji claimed it as the supreme head of the country (**sar desh mukh**, i.e., head of the **desh mukhs**).

The Marathas claimed **chauth** (i.e. 1/4th of the total revenue) from the neighbouring chieftains whose territories did not form part of their homeland/**swarajya**.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1) Match the following

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| i) Jamabandi | a) incharge of revenue collection at pargana level |
| ii) Kulkarni | b) village headman                                 |
| iii) Karkun  | c) village accountant                              |
| iv) Desai    | d) estimated revenue                               |
| v) Patel     | e) clerks  |

2) Analyse the emergence of **kamavisdars** under the Peshwas.

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3) Critically analyse the role of the revenue farmers.

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## 18.4 LAND REVENUE SYSTEM: SOUTH INDIA

We have already discussed in Unit 3 of this course how the process of the formation of the Nayaka kingdoms started as early as Krishnadeva Raya's reign itself (from 1530s). By the close of 16th century, there emerged five powerful Nayak states—Ikkeri, Mysore, Senji, Tanjavur and Madurai. The debacle of the Vijaynagar rulers at the hands of combined forces of the Deccan states in 1565 at the battle of Talikota, provided opportunity to the Bijapur and Golkunda rulers to encroach upon the Vijaynagar territories. The Mughal pressure also pressed the Deccan Sultanates to expand southwards. As for Malabar, there were no large kingdoms. In this region Cannanore, Calicut and Cochin were most important. With this background, let us analyse the land revenue system of these South Indian states.

### 18.4.1 Nayak Kingdoms

Before proceeding further, let us remind you that since the Nayak states were the offshoots of the Vijaynagar polity, the basic land structure under the Nayak kingdoms also remained the same. We have already discussed in Unit 3 that under the Vijaynagar rule, the king was at the helm of affairs; then there were **nayaks**, below them were the **poligars** holding command over the **palaiyams**. The lowest unit was the village. Though in the late 16th and early 17th century, the kings' power had become weak, yet a part of revenue did flow to the centre. Senji and Madurai **nayaks** used to send some amount as late as the early 17th century. However, the Odeyars and the Ikkari **nayaks** totally stopped paying the tribute. Raja Odeyar of Mysore finally (1610) acquired Srirangapattanam from the local Vijaynagar viceroy and thus totally snapped his relations with the Vijaynagar rulers and acted independently.

We do not get sufficient details of the working of the land revenue system under the **Nayaks**. However, land revenue was the chief source of state's income under them. The Madura **Nayaks** are reported to have claimed 1/2 of the produce as state's share. The state appears to collect the revenue in cash. The entire land was not given to the **poligars**. The crown land (**bhandaravada**), though smaller in comparison to **palaiyams**, was the best land reserved for the government for the maintenance of the crown land. The Madura **Nayaks** maintained vast revenue machinery for assessment and collection. But the **poligars** used to pay in the form of tribute (a lump sum) which amounted to 1/3 of the produce. But, sometimes, the **poligars** received total remission of tribute as rewards for public services. Similarly, under weak **Nayaks** the **poligars** tended to refrain from full payment. Besides, we have already discussed in Unit 3, how by the 16th century 'patrimonialism' was on the rise. These **poligars** held land in those areas which had patrilineal proximity (specially the Maravaras expanded fast on this basis). In such areas, the **poligars** became independent. These **poligars** even set up their own military and administrative structure. They divided their territories among their kinsmen and other subsidiary chieftains called **servaikkarars**, who owed military allegiance and tribute and demanded the same from village headman.

With such long chain of intermediaries involved in the collection process, hardly any substantial amount reached the **Nayaks**. For C. Hayavadana Rao, the state's share in South India was 1/4 of the produce, and that of the proprietor (if distinct from the cultivator) a further quarter. Newly cultivated land was exempted from revenue in the first year (in the Godavari delta), and in the second, 1/4th was taken.

In Mysore, the Odeyar ruler Chikkadevaraja Odeyar (1673-1704) is reported to have organised the land tax. The salary of the state officials was half in cash and half in kind. He ordered that no official should spend more than his income. By a careful revenue policy, he accumulated 9 karors of pagodas in his treasury and was acclaimed by his subjects as Navakoti Narayana.

Under the **Nayak** of Ikkeri (Keladi **Kayaks**) the boundaries of land were usually marked out with stones engraved with the figure of the Linga in the presence of the people of the neighbouring villages to avoid any dispute. The revenue income from a village was estimated and the items of expenditure laid down. Relief in taxation was also given in case of flood, etc. But evasion of tax was severely dealt with. At the



village level the **parupatyagara** was responsible to collect all local taxes. He was also the trustee of the land grants made by the king. The **Gandike** was responsible for the realization of revenue. We also hear about accountants (**karanika**) and the treasury officers—**bhandara**, **parapategara**, **senabova** and **nadadhikhar**—appointed in some important cities and villages.

Before Shivappa Nayaka (1645-60), the land revenue system was underdeveloped. It was he who regularised the revenue system. His system of land tenure and assessment orders was called **Sivappa Nayak Sist**. He classified the land, ascertained the fertility of the soil and fixed the rent on the basis of average produce. Land was classified into five categories (1) **Uttamam**: consisting of black sand; (2) **Madhyamam**: of red and mixed soils; (3) **Kamoshtam**: consisting of mixed black soil with a little water; (4) **Adhama**: soil without moisture—hard soil, and (5) **Adhamadhamam** consisting of hot sandy dry soil unfit for cultivation (barren land). For twelve successive years, one plot of each of these categories was cultivated for the king. An accurate record of the seeds sown and the value of the produce was maintained. Total produce for five years and its market value were calculated. Then the average per year was struck. One-third of the average was demanded as the state's share. Further, the maximum and the minimum rates of assessment were fixed.

With regard to the garden of areca-nut, he fixed 1000 areca-nut trees as a unit. Every tree must not be less than 18 feet in height for the purpose of assessment.

As for the nature of land tax in South India during the 17th century, it can be termed as oppressive in the same manner as it was in the Deccan states. The **Nayaks** hardly seem to have attempted to alter the traditional system of revenue collection (as it was prevalent under the Vijaynagar rulers). They hardly took interest in controlling the intermediaries (**poligars**) who took away much revenue for themselves. **R. Sathyanatha Aiyar** is highly critical of the oppression of peasants under the **Madurai Nayaks**. For him, 'it is hard to believe that a kingdom based on the worst form of tyranny and injustice, was able to hold its own against its enemies even for a short time, and that it was able to make any contribution to the progress of the country'. However, **Sanjay Subrahmanyam** stresses that these **poligars** (whom he has termed 'portfolio capitalists') helped greatly in the development of trade and commerce, market towns and generating irrigation facilities to the advantage of the peasants etc. Therefore, according to him, there was hardly any decline in the South Indian economy. He has criticised those who argued that after the battle of Talikota, constant warfare was the chief feature of the South Indian polity which ultimately led to the decline in economy as well.

#### 18.4.2 Malabar States

The Malabar states were an exception where no land tax existed. (Though some historians have raised doubt over this assumption). Here the chief sources of the states' income were: from custom dues; personal participation of the chiefs/**rajas** in trade, and income from their demesne directly controlled by the king/**rajas**.

In fact, owner-cultivators frequently made over their holdings to temples and agreed to cultivate as tenants. In return, they paid 1/8th to 1/6th of the produce to the temples. The peasants' preference to pay to the temples was obvious for it was comparatively less than the state demand. Besides, since all the temple lands were revenue-free, the state hardly derived income from the land tax. Such concentration of resources in the hands of the temples often resulted in conflict between the rulers and the temples.

#### 18.4.3 Taxes Other than Land Revenue

Custom dues (known as **chankan** in Malabar) formed single most important source of revenue. In the Malabar states, succession fees (**purushantaram**) was also levied at the time of the transfer of ancestral property of the deceased. This tax was not levied on agriculturists, but merchants were asked to pay it. Various types of fines (**plzha**) also formed part of the **nadus'** income. A form of 'escheat system' was also prevalent. The properties of those nobles who died without legitimate heir were liable to confiscation. The plunder from the cargo ships also formed part of the chiefs' income. Charges for adopting a child to continue a family line also formed a source of income.

The pearl and shank fisheries were important source of the Madurai Nayak's revenue. But they always clashed with the Marava kings who also put a claim to the proceeds from fishing. The Dutch also grabbed a big share by buying the pearls at nominal prices. Inscriptions also mention taxes on looms and weavers, imports and exports, land and water communications and octroi duties, etc.

The Ikkeri Nayaks also levied extra cess on garden cultivation (*birada*), presents for festivals (*hebbakanike*), on fishermen (*bestagarake*), on forest produce (*banada soge*), on washermen (*madihadike*), for maintaining the village accountants (*senabovana vartane*), perquisites paid to village or town servants for their services (*vartane*), tax on labourers, on market towns (*mulavisa*) and *patti* to be paid as *chauth* to the Marathas. Fairs, marriages, procession and temple festivals were also taxed.

### Check Your Progress 3

1) Match the following:

- |                  |                                       |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1) Bhandaravada  | a) South Indian gold coin             |
| 2) Poligars      | b) custom dues                        |
| 3) Pagodas       | c) revenue collector at village level |
| 4) Chunkam       | d) crown land                         |
| 5) Parupatyagara | e) incharge of palaiyams              |

2) Write a note on 'Sivappa Nayak Sist' in 60 words.

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## 18.5 LET US SUM UP

The revenue system of almost all the Deccan states was based on Malik Ambar's model with slight regional variations. Malik Ambar based his assessment on the basis of actual cultivated area. However, it was more an estimate by observation than actual measurement. Later, Annaji Datto, the Maratha finance minister, shifted to actual measurement, thus rectifying the faults of Malik Ambar's assessment.

Assessment in the Deccan states was a progressive one, i.e., it was assessed keeping in view the category of soil, nature of crops sown, etc. The revenue demand ranged between 1/3 to 1/2 of the produce. Shivaji, however, abolished all the illegal cesses and increased the revenue demand to 40 percent. The state maintained vast machinery of revenue officials for the assessment and collection of revenue. Most of them were paid in the form of either revenue-free land grants or received fixed share in the total amount of the revenue collected. It is generally presumed that Shivaji had totally done away with the intermediaries—*zamindars*, *deshmukhs*, *desais*, *patels*, etc. But, in fact, what Shivaji did was that he curtailed the perquisites and power of these classes to the advantage of the state and the peasants. But under the Peshwas, with the rise of *kamavisdars*, this class again enjoyed special perquisites and even got official sanction for certain privileges which were due to kings only. Another characteristic feature of the revenue structure of the Deccan states was the prevalence of revenue farming. The state, though, provided certain relief measures to the peasants in the form of *taqavi*, in general, the state was satisfied and hardly bothered so long as the regular supply of revenue was ensured. The Marathas also extracted *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* (the former was nothing more than "legal" plunder).

In South India, this was the period of the emergence of the Nayak states. Though, small portion of revenue did flow to the Centre (Vijaynagar kings), the Nayak rulers almost acted independently. Under the Nayaks, mostly land was distributed by and large among the *poligars* who were the incharge of *palaiyams* who used to pay a

lump sum tribute which amounted to 1/3 of the produce. With the rise of 'patrimonialism', these **poligars** often did not make regular payment, especially under weak **Nayaks**. Chikkadeva raja Odeyar, the Odeyar, ruler of Mysore and Shivappa Nayaka gave a definite shape to the revenue administration in South India. But, in general, the **Nayaks** hardly tried to disturb the traditional system of revenue assessment and collection. With the increasing **poligars** pressure, the **Nayak** states hardly seemed to be interested in the welfare of the peasants. However, there exist different viewpoints whether the South Indian revenue system could be termed oppressive.

In the Malabar states, land tax hardly formed the chief source of the states' income. Instead, custom dues were the chief source.

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## 18.6 KEY WORDS

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<b>Chauth</b>	: 1/4 of the total produce claimed from the neighbouring kings
<b>Kamavis</b>	: the business of collecting the revenues of the state
<b>Kathi</b>	: measuring rod which was 5 cubits and 5 <b>muthls</b> (closed fists) in length.
<b>Pagoda</b>	: a Deccani gold coin
<b>Ruka</b>	: copper coin of the Marathas weighing 1/4 tola; 40 <b>ruka</b> -1 <b>taka</b>
<b>Taka</b>	: 1/4th of a rupee

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## 18.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-sec. 18.2.1
- 2) Describe the position Annaji Datto held in the Maratha bureaucracy. Discuss his novel experiments related to revenue system. How he emphasised on systematic assessment based on actual measurement and how he succeeded in rectifying faults of Malik Ambar's system of assessment. See Sub-sec. 18.2.1.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) i) d    ii) c    iii) e    iv) a    v) b
- 2) See Sub-sec. 18.2.3. Discuss how **kamavisdar** emerged as one of the most powerful revenue official. Describe the duties and privileges which he enjoyed.
- 3) See Sub-sec. 18.2.4. Analyse the importance of revenue farmers as revenue collectors; what privileges they enjoyed. Also discuss revenue farmers' relations with the state and the peasants.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) i) d    ii) e    iii) a    iv) b    v) c
- 2) See Sub-sec. 18.4.1. Explain that it was Shivappa **Nayak's** system of revenue assessment. He radically reformed the revenue system in his kingdom. Also discuss the changes which he had introduced.

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# UNIT 19 AGRARIAN RELATIONS: DECCAN AND SOUTH INDIA

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## Structure

- 19.1 Objectives
- 19.2 Introduction
- 19.3 Medieval Deccan Village: Features
- 19.4 Land Ownership
- 19.5 Categories of Land Rights
  - 19.5.1 Mirasi Right
  - 19.5.2 Inam Lands
  - 19.5.3 State Land (Crown Land)
  - 19.5.4 Waste Lands or Lands of Extinct Families
- 19.6 Village Community
  - 19.6.1 Theories
  - 19.6.2 Peasants
  - 19.6.3 Got Sabha or Majlis
- 19.7 Watan System
  - 19.7.1 Balutedars
  - 19.7.2 Feudalism
- 19.8 South India: Agrarian Structure
- 19.9 Nature of Land Rights
- 19.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 19.1 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit, you will be able to learn about:

- the characteristic features of the medieval Deccan village;
- the debate regarding ownership of land in the Deccan;
- the categories of land rights which existed there;
- the nature of village community;
- the relationship between the different sections constituting agrarian society;
- the agrarian structure of South India, and
- the nature of land rights in South India.

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## 19.2 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit, we will discuss the nature of agrarian structure in medieval Deccan and South India and the various Land rights which existed there. First, we will discuss the features of the agrarian structure in medieval Deccan.

A study of the agrarian structure and land rights means an examination of the right to use and dispose off one's landed property which bestowed on the landholder economic benefits and administrative and judicial powers. Land rights controlled the life of the small agricultural societies or the village communities. They regulated the relations of landholders with other members of the village community, persons claiming superior rights over land, the king and his tax collecting officials, etc. The various categories of land rights, whether transferable or hereditary, arose due to economic benefits from land which was the prime source of income for the majority of the people in those days.

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### 19.3 MEDIEVAL DECCAN VILLAGE: FEATURES

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Before analysing the various land rights, we will give a brief description of the medieval Deccan village where these agricultural lands were situated. In later sections, we will also deal with a more complex problem regarding the ownership of land in medieval Deccan and the village community. The village is referred to as **gaon** or **uru** in the local language of the Deccan. It is also called **mauje** (a corrupt form of Arabic **mauza**), and **deh** (persian). A bigger village that included a market place (**bazar**) was called **kasbe** (Arabic **qasbah**). The word **gaon** is derived from Sanskrit **grama**. The vast expanse of village fields was called **gaon shiwan**. It consisted of cultivated (**kali**) and non-cultivated or waste lands. Cultivable land was divided into plots. Fields belonging to one family were called **thal** (Sanskrit **Sthala**). It consisted of 20-40 blocks. Each block consisted of area called **shet** or **kshetra** (Sanskrit) or **jamin** (Persian **zamin**). Each area together with the surname of the original family proprietor was registered in the village records lists called **thalazadas**. The records containing the extent of land actually cultivated, and the amount of revenue assessed, were incorporated in a ledger called **Kul ghadni**.

The boundaries of the village were well demarcated and any encroachment upon it was unwelcome. The cultivable area of a village was called **kali** (indigenous term originally meaning black soil fit for cultivation) and the residential site of a village was known as **gaon sthan** or **pandhari** (indigenous term, originally meaning white soil unfit for cultivation). The **pandhari** was surrounded and protected by a wall called **gaon Kunsu**. It was divided into house sites called **ghar**, **thikane** or **gharthana**. Each family built a house (**ghar** or **vada**) on its allotted site. The house site and the house left by a family (**gatkul**) which had either left the village or had become extinct were called **gatkul**, **gharthana** and **gatkul vada** respectively. These lands were either taken over by the village community or acquired by a new family, but the name of the original proprietor was not changed in the **thalazadas**. The original family in possession of **thal** or estate was called **jatha**. The **jatha** family was synonymous with **thalkari** or **thalwahi**, and the list of divisions in consonance with family names was known as **zaminzada jathawar**. One such division was **munda**. The villages varied in size according to the fertility of the soil, produce and population.

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### 19.4 LAND OWNERSHIP

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The question of ownership of land has been and continues to be a subject of scholarly debate. The **Manu Smriti** held that land belonged to the person (or family) who reclaimed it from the forest or brought it under cultivation. A contemporary juridical work **Parashurampratap** compiled by Sabaji Pratap Raja, a protegee of Burham Nizam Shah I, throws light on the issue of the ownership of land. It reinforces the claim of the king to the wealth of the soil only, thereby conceding the proprietary rights of the cultivators. In the Nizam Shahi kingdom, **Malik Ambar** revived the ancient co-parcenary village institutions by recognizing the hereditary proprietary rights of the **Thackari** called **mirasi**.

The Marathas looked to the ancient traditions laid down in the **Smritis** as regards the problem of land ownership. The village co-parcenary and **gota** institutions existed in the Maratha realm in the 17th-18th century. There is evidence of a sale-deed which refers to the sale of land, transferring the **mirasi** rights to the **Peshwa**. In another instance, land was granted by the village community to the **Peshwa** for a sum of money assuring him against the claims of the former proprietors. The author of the treatise **Vyavaharmayukha** (a 17th work) points out that state is not the owner of all lands but can only realize taxes from landholders.

The various rights of the king in the soil have been mentioned in the grants of the Marathas. The **Vyavaharmayukha** regards **vrittis** or **watans** (consisting of land and houses) as private property. It also refers to the right of partition, sale, mortgage and inheritance which further corroborates the function and existence of **gota majlis** (village assembly).

In the Muslim ruled states, the question of land rights and ownership of land

acquired a new dimension due to various reasons. The Muslim legal theories regarding the rights of the conquered races or tributaries provide the basis for resolving the problem of land ownership. In accordance with these theories, an important duty of a Muslim ruler was to wage wars against the land occupied by the non-Muslims (*bar ul harb*). The people of the areas conquered in this process were extended protection on payment of tribute. These people were called *zimmis*. The author of the traditional Islamic *fiqh Hidayah* states regarding the conquered territories that either they should be divided among the soldiers in conformity with the way suggested by the Prophet, or they should be restored to the original inhabitants on payment of *jizya* and *kharaj* (land tax). In the latter case, property rights were vested with the original inhabitants. The amount the *zimmis* had to pay as land tax was one half of the produce, whereas the Muslims were required to pay a tenth of the produce called *ushr*. The Muslim theorists regard cultivators as tenants referred to in documents as *r'ayats*. Their right to property in the soil and in that sense ownership of land was not recognized formally by the Muslim rulers except Malik Ambar who accepted *mirasi* rights.

Modern theories regarding the ownership of land in medieval Deccan also deserve attention. The first theory advocated by B.H. Baden-Powell in his work, 'The Indian Village Community (1896)', regards almost all agricultural land (except *inam* and *watan* in which case individual or institutional ownership was prevalent) to have been owned by the state. According to him: "Ownership was only acknowledged in land granted revenue free by the state and apparently in lands held on the privileged tenure of *watan*" (land held in virtue of office in a village or district). A.S. Altekar counters the above by propounding a theory of peasant ownership of all agricultural land. In his work 'A History of Village Communities in Western India (1927)', he neither accepts communal ownership of land (as advocated by Marx and H.J.S. Maine) nor state ownership but enunciates peasant proprietor ownership. He goes to the extent of denying the *inamdars* any proprietary rights in the soil and recognizes *inamdars* as having only one right, i.e., to collect the revenue. S.N. Sen in his *Administrative System of the Marathas (1923)* categorizes three kinds of land viz., *inam*, *miras* and state's land and two classes of peasants—*mirasdars* and *uparis*. The *mirasdars* possessed permanent proprietary rights in their land and could not be evicted as long as they paid rent. The land held by the *mirasdars* was hereditary and saleable, and, even when they were evicted for non-payment of tax, they had the right to recover their ancestral lands. The *uparis* were tenants-at-will holding government land under the supervision of *mamlatdars*. These theories are based on the reports of the early British administrators and concede two important points: (1) there were two classes of peasants, and (2) the *miras* land belonged to the individual *mirasdars* on which tax was levied.

The reports however disagree on the question of rights in the land of extinct families and wastelands. They do not specify *watan* and *inam* tenures and maintain ambiguity as regards government lands.

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## 19.5 CATEGORIES OF LAND RIGHTS

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The rights and privileges enjoyed by the cultivating families comprising the village community were determined in accordance with the degree of superiority of proprietary rights in land held by them. The cultivated area of a village was divided into: (1) *Miras* lands (2) *Inam* lands (3) State lands and (4) lands of extinct families. The various rights in these lands would throw light on the agrarian system of the period under review.

### 19.5.1 *Mirasi* Right

The word *miras* is of Arabic origin. As mentioned in the Marathi documents, it refers to hereditary or transferable right or patrimony (*hap rotli*) obtained by descent, purchase or gift, etc. The *mirasdars* were the holders of land under the *mirasi* tenure. They owned the village land and could exact rent in money or service from persons who lived on their land. There were two categories of the *mirasdars* (1) the hereditary owners of the *miras* land, and those who had reclaimed the *gatkul* land of the village. The hereditary *mirasdars* were placed in the old land lists of the

villages called *thalazadas*, but they did not possess any titled deeds over land. The other category possessed *miras patra* (*miras*—deeds) attested by the authorities of the village community where the deed was sanctioned by the village communities of the neighbouring areas and by the *deshmukhs* and *deshpandes* of the district.

The practice of issuing *miras patra* was analogous to the system mentioned in the *Smritis*. The families of the *mirasdars* possessed the right to vote in the village assembly or *got sabha*. More specifically the elder member of the family exercised the right in accordance with the Hindu co-parcenary family system. In the Maratha state under Shivaji, the *mirasdars'* rights and privileges were substantially curtailed. The *mirasi* right embodied the concept of hereditary proprietorship of land. In the case of inability to pay the government dues, if someone was forced to leave his land his name continued to occur in the *thalazada* and his descendants could recover the land even after hundred years on payment of arrears to the government.

The village land was held by the *mirasdars*: 1) on the basis of joint co-parcenary terms according to which the village land was divided into several shares, and 2) on the basis of a single proprietor ownership of the village.

*Mirasi* rights held on the basis of village coparcenary or ancient *Thal* system.

Such lands were held in common or jointly by the members of different families of a village. The share and the rights and immunities which went with these were clearly demarcated. The original *thal* was held by the *jatha* in the form of several shares. The *jatha* collectively comprised the lineal descendants of the first occupants of the *thal*. As a corporate body, the *jatha* was responsible for cultivation and payment of government and other dues. In case a member of the *jatha* did not leave behind an heir, his land was divided among his surviving relatives in accordance with the Hindu law of inheritance. Each individual member of the *jatha* was accountable for his share of payment of dues to the government although the payment was made collectively by the members of the *jatha*. Sale of one's patrimony was not easy and was carried out only if absolutely necessary. The sale could not be done without the approval of the village community. The members of the *jatha* were related to each other and were called *ghar bhau* ('Home Brothers'). The purchasers of land or new members of the *jatha* were referred to as *biradar bhau* (brothers by village) coparcenary and they were bound to meet all the obligations of the original holders. The *mirasdars* had to pay a permanent land tax to the government called, *swasthidhara*, although the government also levied certain other cesses such as *miraspati* from time to time. In case a family ceased to exist, its share went to the village coparcenary. The *gatakul* or abandoned lands of the village were placed at the disposal of the village co-parcenary or *patel* (village headman).

The chief characteristics of *miras* tenure: The *mirasdars* could sell their land as and when required. The purchaser could be an outsider who might not settle in the village where he had bought land. He could arrange for some members of his family to stay in the village where he had purchased land. Buying and selling of *miras* lands required the sanction or recognition of village officers and neighbours. The sale could be carried out without the prior approval of the state which lends support to the view that the state did not possess proprietary rights over the *miras* land. The purchaser on payment of revenue to the state was at liberty to use the land. The state sanctioned the sale by issuing a document for which it charged a fee equal to one fourth of the sale price.

The *mirasdar* possessed complete private proprietary rights in the *miras* land. The state could not encroach upon the *mirasi* rights. Also the headman and other people of the village could not infringe upon the *mirasi* rights. However, if the state wanted it could convert the *mirasi* lands into house sites after giving due compensation to the *mirasdars* in the form of *gatakul* lands. The corporate functioning of the village and *desh* was ensured due to the existence of the *mirasi* tenure.

### 19.5.2 Inam Lands

*Inam* is an Arabic word originally meaning gift or reward. In its broadest sense, it suggests either simply *inam*, *inam* villages or *inam* lands. Mere *inam* implied grant of a specific amount of revenue of a village to a person. The *inam* village was assigned on a hereditary basis to persons or officials.

Here we will focus only on the nature of **inam** as a category of land tenure. The **inam** lands were either totally exempt from tax, or subject to a low tax called **inam patti**. It was a privileged category of land right. **Inam** was assigned to different categories: hereditary village officials, state officials, temples and **balutedars** (priests). The holders were designated **inamdars**. There were both resident and absentee **inamdars**. There is sufficient evidence to prove that these land assignments were hereditary. Rights in the **inam** land held by a **watandar** (hereditary village office holder) were saleable and transferable together with the office or **watan**. However it cannot be said with certainty whether the **inam** lands and the **watan** could be sold or transferred separately. It has not been established whether the **inam** lands held by institutions such as temples, monasteries, etc. could be sold without any constraints.

### 19.5.3 State Land (Crown Land)

Land held by the government as a corporate body or by the Peshwa/ruler could be treated as state land, although there might have been some kind of difference between the two. State lands existed in many villages of the Deccan managed by the local bureaucrats. They could be sold by them after taking approval from the central government. These lands were granted in **inam** or could be developed into house sites.

### 19.5.4 Waste Lands or Lands of Extinct Families

The **mirasi** rights and **inam** rights were unambiguous; however, the rights in the land of extinct families or wastelands contained a large degree of vagueness. These lands could be sold by either the village headman or village assembly or state. The lands of the families which had become extinct were called **gatkul zamin**. Lands which were left uncultivated for long periods were called **pad zamin**. Even the **miras** lands contained **pad zamin**. We will discuss those lands which had become barren due to the extinction of the proprietors. Both **gatkul zamin** and **pad zamin** meant wastelands. The term **khalisa pad zamin** referred to state wastelands.

The wastelands could be appropriated and disposed off by the village headman, local village assembly and government. The lands expropriated by the village headman were regarded as **miras** lands on which land revenue was levied. The houses and house sites of extinct families could be acquired by the village headman after taking the approval of the local village assembly. However, generally this was not a lucrative proposition. The lands thus appropriated were cultivated by the **uparis** on a share-cropping basis and were subject to a high and fixed land revenue demand which could be relaxed only in the event of crop failure. Though such an undertaking added to the headman's social prestige, on the whole it was not worthwhile. Above all, the headman did not have the authority to dispose off the land according to his wishes.

Wastelands were disposed off by the local assembly either as **miras** or as **inam** lands. The purchaser (**inamdar**) of wastelands in the form of **inam** was not required to pay land tax on the lands. However, the village as a group had to pay land tax to the government on large **inam** lands thus sold. Wastelands sold as **miras** lands were subject to a heavy land tax which had to be paid by the new incumbent.

The government at the request of the headman gave away wastelands to **mirasdars** as compensation for taking over their **miras** lands located near the inhabited area of a village for converting them into house sites. The grant of wastelands to local bureaucrats and hereditary officers was a means of encouraging cultivation. Wastelands were also granted as **inam** to individuals and institutions. The king or Peshwa also received wastelands in the form of grants. Wastelands which were neither appropriated by the village headman nor by the local assembly were resumed by the government. The government granted these lands as **inam** to priests, state officials, temples, mosques, hereditary officers, etc. In this manner, the government aimed at curtailing state expenditure and also securing the allegiance of the grantees to the state.



Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What were the main features of Medieval Deccan Village?  
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- 2) Enumerate the four categories of land rights in the Deccan.  
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- 3) Discuss briefly the modern theories regarding ownership of land in the Deccan.  
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## 19.6 VILLAGE COMMUNITY

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The village community was based on the principle of hereditary rights in land. This principle was derived from ancient Hindu system of joint property. The village headman, accountant, artisans, landholders, etc. constituted the village community. A few autonomous village units combined to form larger territorial units called **nalkwadi** or **sthal** (Pre-Muslim Hindu period) under an officer called **nalk** whose tasks included assisting the village headman for collecting revenue and heading the local militia. About 84 or more villages combined to form an administrative division called **paragana** or **desh** headed by a **deshmukh**. These larger territorial units acted as links between the villages and the ruler. The **Sardesais** and **Sardeshpandes** (above the **deshmukhs** and **desais**) were other components in the chain between villages and the ruler. A village consisting of a trading centre was called **qasba**. The corporate body of the village and **desh** was called **gota** derived from Sanskrit **gotra** which means family. Thus the villages and **parganas** as territorial units which were constituted according to the ancient customs of villages communities remained unaffected by political changes.

### 19.6.1 Theories

The socio-economic writings of the 19th century project two broad theories on the nature of the Indian village community. The first theory as advocated by Karl Marx (based on two books written by British administrators, e.g., Sir C.T. Metcalfe, the acting Governor-General of India who considers the Indian village community as stagnant) regards the village community as 'self-sufficing' and unchangeable based on 'division of labour'. The individuals such as priest, barber, headman, etc. are referred to as rural servants by Baden Powell and others. According to Karl Marx, these servants were maintained at the expense of the whole community. Relying on Baden-Powell's work **Indian Village Community** (1896). Max Weber pointed out that the village servants were provided a share in land or harvest or money in return for the service they performed for the village community. This Max Weber terms as 'demiurgical labour'. Marx and Weber attribute the 'unchangeableness' of Indian society to 'economic self sufficiency' and 'Caste system combined with magical traditionalism.

The view of the historians like S.N. Sen and A.S. Altekar are in conformity with the theory propounded by Marx and Weber. Both agree that the village servants were employed by the village as a whole. S.N. Sen clearly points to the hereditary nature of occupation of the village servants.

Refuting the demiurgic theory, sociologists and anthropologists writing on rural India and the little communities enunciate the **jajmani** theory. It was first propounded by W.H. Wiser, an American Christian missionary. According to him, rural servants were engaged on a hereditary basis by certain families (patrons) belonging to the dominant castes on a trans-village level. T.O. Beidelman defines the **jajmani** system as a feudal system consisting of hereditary obligations of payment and service between two or more families of different castes in the same area. M.N. Srinivas, an eminent sociologist, does not accept the **jajmani** concept. He cites instances to disprove the element of hereditary service and also the opinion regarding the relation between specific families.

### 19.6.2 Peasants

The reports of the British administrators as well as the indigenous Marathi records throw valuable light on the categories of peasants and the land tenures which existed in the Deccan. Various terms are used for the peasants in the records such as **raiyat**, **loka**, **praja**, **kula** or **kunbi**. The village land was held by the peasants or cultivators. They can be divided into two broad categories: a) **mirasdars** and 2) **uparis**. The **mirasdar** (**mirasi** or **thalkari**) was generally a landed proprietor cultivator (free holder). The **upari** was a tenant-at-will. He was a stranger in the village where he cultivated the land either of the **mirasdar** or government (after the second half of the 18th century). These lands were held by the **upari** on the **ukti** tenure. This was a land-lease comprising a verbal agreement for a year in which the rent rates were not fixed. The tenant cultivators also held land on **Qaul** (agreement)-**Istava** (land) tenure. It was a contractual agreement (lease for 5, 7 or 9 years) intended to encourage cultivators to bring wasteland under cultivation. The **deshmukh** who issued the **Qaul-Istava** was allowed commission on the wasteland thus reclaimed. Large **inam** lands were cultivated by the **uparis** on a share cropping (**batai**) basis. Occasionally, the **mirasdars** could also be tenants holding **inam** lands. The absentee **inamdar** got his share of rent in cash either through his agent in the village or village headman whom he deputed for the task. The resident **inamdar** was paid rent in kind. The amount was usually half of the gross produce.

Individual peasants and hereditary village officers were holders of **miras** lands on which land tax was levied. The obligation to pay the final land tax to the government even in the case of poor harvest or crop failure induced the **mirasdars** and village headman to leave the village. The **uparis** were the tenants of the **mirasdars** who cultivated the **miras** land on sharecropping terms. They paid the rent to the government if their landlord was absconding. It was generally 2/3rd of the total produce. An important change which occurred in the second half of the 18th century was that the **mirasdars** became cultivators of lands and the **uparis** were encouraged by the government to cultivate state and wastelands. It is clear that tenancy was not prevalent on a large scale in the Deccan, sale of land was infrequent and that the **uparis** soon acquired occupancy rights in land.

### 19.6.3 Got Sabha or Majlis

**Gota Sabha** was an independent body which held jurisdiction over the administrative, fiscal and judicial affairs of the village or **pargana**. The administrative body of the village consisting of the local officials of the **pargana** was called **diwan**. The two—**got** and **diwan**—performed the role of arbiter in disputes brought to them by the village community. The **watandars** and **balutedars-watandars** participated in the meeting of the **got sabha**. The Muslim rule in the Deccan promoted the development of the **majlis** system, the **qazi** serving as the link between **gota** and **diwan**. The traditional system of naming the judgement according to the nature of transaction was discontinued. The verdict was attested by the members of the **majlis** before it became a legal document (**mahzar**).

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## 19.7 WATAN SYSTEM

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**Watan** is an Arabic term and **watan** system owes its origin in the Deccan to the establishment of the Muslim rule. Broadly speaking, it refers to a hereditary grant

made by the government to an office-holder in a village, in lieu of services rendered by him to the village community. The hereditary village officers were permanent residents of the village (**desaks**) and were granted land by the state together with rights and immunities in lieu of administrative tasks performed by them in the village. The **desaks** were called **watandars** (**deshmukh**, **desai**, **deshpande**, **kulkarni**, etc). They were exempted from payment of land revenue to the government. The Smritis refer to **vrittis** which was the indigenous variant of **watan**, and the emolument received by the holders of **vrittis** were termed as **nibandhas**. The rent-free land held by the **watandar** was called **inam**.

The chief hereditary officer of the village was the **patel**, also called **gava patel** or **mokaddam patel** in the contemporary Marathi records. The main responsibility of the **patel** was to collect land revenue and remit the government share to the state treasury. As the village headman, he performed several administrative duties in the village. In return, he received certain privileges (**haq**) and perquisites (**lazims**) which were mentioned in his **watan-deed**. **Haq** was granted to him as a matter of right (legal grants). It consisted of a share of the total revenue collection in cash or kind which was fixed by the state. **Lazim** was voluntary payment such as **phaski** (a handful of any corn) **pasodi** (a garment), etc; free services from **mahars** and artisans; seniority rights (**man pan**) which enabled him to preside over the village festivities. Besides the **patel**, other officers such as **kulkarni**, and **chaugula** (**patel's** assistant) also enjoyed perquisites and rights in return for their services.

The hereditary officers of a **paragana** were **deshmukh** and **deshpande**. The **deshmukh** was the head **patel**. For his services he was paid in kind from land and also received services and goods from the village servants, merchants, etc. Besides, he also held land in the village. The **deshkulkarni** supervised the work of the **kulkarnis** in his **paragana**. He was however subordinate to the **deshpande**. The **deshkulkarni** received remuneration in the form of rent-free land as well as payment in cash and kind which was usually half the amount the **deshmukh** received.

Seth and Mahajan were hereditary officials of the **qasba** or **peth** (market village). They received emoluments in cash or kind and land. A **taraf** or **karyat** consisted of a few villages. This territorial unit was smaller than a **paragana**. The hereditary officer of this unit was the **naik**. His task was to collect taxes from the cultivators. Later in the Muslim-ruled states, this officer was replaced by the **havaladar**.

The **deshmukhs** and **deshpandes** were the **zamindars** (**haqqadars**) who did not possess proprietary rights over all the lands under their jurisdiction. They sold their lands only under desperation, but the rights and privileged attached to their office could not be sold separately. Their position remained unaffected even in times of political upheavals.

There was a sharp distinction between the **mirasi** and **watani** rights. **Mirasi** was a hereditary proprietorship right in the land, whereas the **watani** right flowed from the office held and services offered by the **watandar** which was transferable. A **mirasdar** could also be a **watandar**, but a **watandar** need not necessarily be a **mirasdar**. A **watandar**, however, held **inam** lands on a hereditary basis.

### 19.7.1 Balutedars

The rural servants in Maharashtra villages are referred to as twelve **balutes** (**bārah balute**) or **alutas**. The scholars differ regarding the composition of the **balutedars**. However, the following were invariably included in the list: carpenter, blacksmith, potter, leather-worker, ropemaker, barber, washerman, astrologer, Hindu priest and **mahar**. The term (referred to by Grant Duff, etc) twelve **alutas** was probably an extension of the word **balutas** and had the same connotation. The **alutas** are not mentioned in the 18th century Marathi documents and, thus, it appears that they were found only occasionally in villages. There were two categories of the **balutedars**: 1) **watan** holding **balutas** and stranger(**upari**) **balutas**. The first category possessed hereditary monopoly over their services. They were employed by the village as a whole and served the individual villagers. The **balutedars** were paid by the peasants in three ways:

- 1) in kind or cash called **baluta**;

- 2) in the form of perquisites, rights and privileges in cash or kind, and
- 3) in the form of revenue-free inam lands.

It is not clear whether the perquisites were enjoyed by the **upari-balutas** also. Regarding the **inam** lands, it can be safely said that only **watan**-holding **balutas** were entitled to hold these lands. The **baluta-watan** could be transferred divided or sold without the consent of the village as a whole, but such a transaction required the sanction of the village assembly.

The division of the **baluta-watan** did not imply division of service duties, but of emoluments. The amount of emoluments did not increase; therefore, such a practice was not discouraged. The **balutas** remained the servants of the whole village and not of any family.

The **balutas** generally belonged to different occupational castes. The priest and the accountant were Brahmins. The priests did not hold any **watan**. Their function was confined to certain castes or families because of the peculiar nature of Hindu rites and ceremonies. These families (**jajman**) were either temporary or permanent clients of the priests. Thus, the **jajmani** principle is applicable to priests, but not to the twelve **balutas**. In the final analysis, it can be stated that the **watandars** and **balutedars** were maintained and controlled by the village as a body.

### 19.7.2 Feudalism

The **pargana** and the village community represented a vertically stratified structure, whereas **jati** was structurally horizontal and had a trans-village character. The latter constituted an important component of a village and **paragana**. It also had a tribal structure which imparted to it a mobile and militant character. Thus the community structure of the local society in medieval Deccan was pluralistic, but stratified either horizontally or vertically. From this we can infer that the Indian village community was not self-sustained and isolated but had linkages with neighbouring villages. The factor which regulated the functioning of the community structure was the **watan** system which represented division of labour between peasants and artisans in the village community. The increase in productivity in the local society led to the accumulation of surplus which got converted into perquisites of the community leaders. In a society where land was available in plenty a system based on landed property could not have evolved. Instead, the peasant proprietors turned community leaders were metamorphosed into the rural ruling class which acquired the attributes of exploiters by the end of the 16th century. Around this time, the **watan** tended to become the private property of the grantees. It was sold separately and freely in this period. The perquisites of the rural ruling class absorbed into the political structure of the state were transformed into rights of exaction. This tendency is seen by historians like Fukazawa as feudalisation from below. However, we find that class relations between peasants and rural ruling classes were not lord-serf relations as in medieval Europe, but they can be termed as communal-based agrarian relations. In the context of medieval Deccan, the peasants were the direct producers who possessed the means of production carried on by a nuclear peasant family. The community leaders who became the exploiting class of the local society did not become landlords or feudal lords because landownership in a society where land was abundant was not an important criteria for appropriating the surplus produced by the peasants and artisans. In such a society it was the community which was supreme, and the rural ruling groups could not monopolise the judicial rights over the peasants.

The grant of **jagirs** and **saranjam (mokasa)** to state officials for realizing revenue from the **paraganas** and villages has been termed as feudalization from above. But these terms should be used with caution considering the peculiarities of the situation in medieval Deccan.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss in brief the two theories which throw light on the nature of Indian village community.

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 2) What do you understand by the term 'Watan System'? What were its chief characteristics?

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3) List the two categories of peasants which existed in medieval Deccan.

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## 19.8 SOUTH INDIA: AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

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In the 17th and 18th centuries, reports were prepared by the British administrators on the land-tenure in South India. Stone inscriptions and local village documents (*kaifiyat*), resolutions adopted at the village level written on palm leaves and contained in Mackenzie collections, Christian missionary documents, foreign travellers accounts are the various sources which throw light on the land system of South India.

The reports of the British officers refer to communal holding of land in South Indian villages. In the pre-modern period, land holding and cultivation were the basis of production. There were two types of villages in South India: *brahmadeya* and *non-brahmadeya*. The Brahmins were granted villages by the rulers called *Brahmadeya*. In these villages the Brahmins established a communal self-governing body called *sabha*. These villages were mostly established during the Pallava and Chola times. *Non-brahmadeya* villages were more ancient and numerically more than the *brahmadeya* ones. From a study of inscriptions of the same locality and of the same period the following point emerges: 1) individual (big landlords held many villages) landholding prevalent in *brahmadeya* and communal landholding among *urar* (peasants) in *non-brahmadeya* villages. *Ur* was the assembly in *non-brahmadeya* villages. In the Vijaynagar period, the village was the major unit in which land rights were vested. There was a shift in focus from *nadu* (locality) called *nattar* and *okkul* (in Karnataka) during the Chola period to village as the prime unit in the Vijaynagar kingdom. The autonomous bodies like *sabha*, *Ur*, and *nattar* declined and later disappeared in the Vijaynagar period giving place to *nayak* or independent chieftain.

The village servants (*ayagars*) were given *manya* or tax-free land, or subject to quit rent. Land tenures for Brahmins and temples were called *Ekobhogam* and *devadana* respectively. Private right (income shares) accruing from increased productivity due to investment in agriculture was called *dasavanda* or *katku-kodage* in Karnataka. An important change in the landholding system and agrarian structure occurred in the 16th century. The warrior chieftains (*nayaks*) of Vijaynagar penetrated into the local kinbased peasant societies in the Tamil country. Temples in the Tamil region had functioned as autonomous landholders and corporate institutions for a long period. The Vijaynagar chieftains took over the management of temples. The agrarian economy underwent a drastic change since the temple lands were transformed into contractual tenures. By acquiring control over these tenures, the chieftains got metamorphosed into agrarian magnates.

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## 19.9 NATURE OF LAND RIGHTS

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The various categories of agrarian rights (*kaniyatchi*) that existed in the rural society

will throw valuable light on the interaction between the **nayaks** and the peasants. The agrarian surplus produced by the peasantry and successfully extracted by the Telegu **nayaks** was the basis of the power of the Vijaynagar state. The dry plains of the Tamil country were settled by migrant Telegu warrior clans like Thottian, Panta Reddi, Naidu and Kambalattar. The traditional Tamil peasant elites and their groups like **nattavar** (villages) and **uravar** (peasant settlements) were displaced by Telegu-speaking groups who transformed this area into a peripheral zone.

The warrior-chieftains promoted agricultural development by bringing hitherto populated (**kongu**) region under intensive cultivation. Tank irrigation was introduced in the black soil belt of kongu, and cultivation of cash crops like sugarcane was encouraged.

The later 15th century witnessed the conversion of temple lands (**devadana**) into semi-private landed estates (**kaniparru**) of the warrior chieftains. There is an inscription of A.D. 1511 which refers to conversion of a peasant settlement with a temple tenure (**tirunamathukkani**) into a **kaniparru** of a warrior chieftain. The right to cultivate as well as levy taxes was transferred to the grantee. Various land and fiscal rights were contained in these land transactions of the 16th century. The traditional peasant elites, viz., **uravar** and **nattar** and the peasant assemblies such as **ur** were replaced by the dynamic and expanding **nayak** created agrarian political structure.

Many towns or fortified settlements were established in this period by the **nayaks**. They served as both political and economic centres. They were conspicuous by their absence in the Kaveri delta. **Palaiyan** was reclaimed land held by the warrior chieftains where peasants, artisans, and merchants were integrated into the political and economic network established by the **nayak** chief. They extracted **kudanal** (local dues) and **sittayam** from the peasants and artisans respectively.

The land tenure of the **nayaks** is referred to as **kaniparru**. It probably refers to rights in lands, i.e., to buy and sell without the absolute right of ownership. It also refers to a variety of taxes. An inscription dated A.D. 1522 testifies to the transfer of temple land and the rights associated with land to the **nayak**. The rights were as follows:

- 1) to collect dues from the peasants;
- 2) to cultivate the land and settle people; and
- 3) to receive **prasadam** (sacred food) from the temple.

However, the transfer of land to the **nayak** did not imply transfer of the right of ownership. The **nayak** could use the land and collect taxes, but the temples reserved the right of ownership to themselves.

**Kaniparru** was a conditional and contractual tenure or a lease between the warrior chieftains and temples. The temples retained the right of ownership and imposed obligations on the **nayaks** to pay the temples a certain amount in cash or kind.

The process of transfer of land did not lead to eviction of peasants. They retained their share (**karai**) of land. In case of transfer of temple lands to the peasants, the peasant leaders (**mudalis**) took over the cultivation of the land. They paid **vadavathi** (tribute) to the temple. This kind of peasant land-tenure was called **kudalingadevadanam**. The peasants in such villages had a permanent share in land and could not be displaced.

The rate of taxation was high. Besides, peasants were pressed to maintain irrigation facilities. Agrarian stress was building up but was held back due to the availability of land in the **kongu** area. Later, in the 17th century, when this area ('the frontier') was closed, peasant discontent increased. This was an outcome of the agrarian policies of the Vijaynagar **nayaks**.

Land was also leased out to individuals other than the **nayaks** and to institutions. The lease included houses, wet and dry land. In certain instances, the descendants of the leaseholder also enjoyed the right of sale, mortgage, etc.

Taxes imposed by the central and local governments on the land leased out by the temples were paid to the temple authorities by the leaseholders. Land leased out by temples were not totally exempt from taxes. The taxes received from the leaseholders

were remitted by the temple authorities to the state while retaining certain other taxes like **kadamai** for themselves. The leaseholders were given the right of cultivation and reclamation and colonisation of land. Generally, leaseholders did not cultivate themselves; they got it done by others. They paid taxes to the temple treasury in cash or kind. Cultivators also got a share of the produce. The leaseholders were almost the owners of the leased land.

The **mirasi** right was an important component of the land system in South India. The **mirasdars** held tax-free land called **manlyam**. They were entitled to a share of the produce (**kuppattam**) from these lands.

In certain cases, several **mirasdars** held village land jointly. The cultivators were called **payakari** who were divided into two groups—**ulkudis** and **parakudis**. The former stayed in the village. Their rights were not transferable and could not be infringed upon. The **parakudis** were tenants-at-will whose right of cultivation was contractual. Taxes paid by the **mirasdar** or the government were referred to as **pannu**, **irai**, **vari**, etc. There were two categories of the **mirasdars**—resident and non-resident. Slave labour was also employed by the **mirasdars** to cultivate land. The **mirasdars** acted as intermediaries between the government and villagers.

Thus, **mirasi** right though hereditary was not uniform. Its nature varied from place to place. It could be transferred through sale, mortgage or gift.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) Discuss the nature of Kaniparru right.

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- 2) What were the chief characteristics of mirasi right in South India?

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## 19.10 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have outlined the chief features of medieval Deccan village. The debate regarding ownership of land in medieval Deccan has been discussed. The nature of the village community as well as the various components constituting village community have been dealt with. The **Watan** system which was peculiar to the Deccan has been analysed in detail. The unit also deals with the land system of South India. The various land rights as well as the agrarian relations arising out of these rights in land have been highlighted.

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## 19.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) See Section 19.3
- 2) See Section 19.5 and Sub-sec's 19.5.1, 19.5.2, 19.5.3 and 19.5.4.
- 3) See Section 19.4

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) See Section 19.6 and Sub-Sec. 19.6.1
- 2) See Section 19.7 and Sub-Sec.'s. 19.7.1 and 19.7.2.
- 3) See Section 19.6 and Sub-sec. 19.6.1

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) See Section 19.9
- 2) See Section 19.9



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# UNIT 20 FISCAL AND MONETARY SYSTEM, PRICES

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## Structure

- 20.0 Objectives
- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Fiscal System
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- 20.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 20.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit we will discuss the fiscal and monetary system of Mughal India.

After going through this Unit you would know about the

- main taxes other than land revenue imposed by the Mughals;
- the mechanism of collecting taxes;
- the Mughal currency system and
- the working of the mints, and
- prices and their movement during the Mughal Rule.

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## 20.1 INTRODUCTION

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As we discussed in Unit 17, land revenue was the most important source of income in Mughal India. Besides this, there were other sources of income for the state. In the first section of this unit we will discuss the latter.

The contemporary sources provide detailed information about land revenue but on other taxes it is sketchy and brief.

In the second section, we will discuss the monetary system. The Mughals had a developed system of metallic currency. The Empire was dotted with mints issuing coins of gold, silver and copper. Here we will discuss the relative value of various currencies, system of minting and the location of mints.

In the third section, we will take note of prices. Among other things, we will also discuss the impact of price fluctuation on the production and commercial activities of the period.

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## 20.2 FISCAL SYSTEM

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It is very difficult to ascertain the exact share of taxes other than land revenue in the total income of the Empire. Shirin Moosvi has calculated them to be around 18% and 15% for the *subas* (provinces) of Gujarat and Agra, while in rest of the *subas* it was less than 5% (*The Economy of the Mughal Empire c. 1600*).

Here, we will not go into the details of various taxes. We will confine ourselves to what these taxes were and what was the mechanism to collect them.

### 20.2.1 Taxes other than Land Revenue

The main sources were tolls and levies on craft production, market levies, customs and **rahdari** (road tax) both on inland and overseas trade, and also mint charges. Apart from these, the state treasury received huge amounts by way of war booty, tributes and gifts from various quarters.

Almost everything sold on the market was taxable. The main articles taxed were clothes, leather, foodgrains, cattle, etc. Every time the merchandise was sold, a certain tax was to be paid. We do not have enough data to calculate the exact rate of taxation. The general accounts suggest that these taxes were quite harsh. Peter Mundy (1632) complains that the governor at Patna was harsh in realizing taxes, and even women bringing milk for sale were not exempted. Another contemporary writer says that every trader—from the rose-vender down to clay-vender, from the weaver of fine linen to that of coarse cloth had to pay tax.

Apart from marchants, all the artisans also paid taxes on their products. **Katraparcha** was a tax levied on all sorts of cotton, silk and wool cloth. Indigo, saltpetre and salt were other important commodities subjected to taxation. In some cases as in Panjab, the tax on salt during Akbar's time was more than double the prime cost.

#### Customs and Transit dues

When the goods were taken from one place to another, a tax was levied. We have some information on the rate of custom levies. All merchandise brought through the ports was taxable. Abul Fazl says that during Akbar's time the duties did not exceed 2½ per cent. One early seventeenth century account suggests that at Surat the charges were 2½ per cent on goods, 3 per cent on provisions and 2 per cent on money (gold & silver). Towards the close of the 17th century, the customs ranged from 4 to 5 per cent.

Aurangzeb levied separate transit taxes for separate groups. The rate fixed was 2½% from Muslims 5% from Hindus and 3½% from foreigners. These rates were applicable throughout the Empire.

The articles valued at less than 52 rupees were exempted. For some time, Aurangzeb exempted the Muslims from all custom dues but after a short period the levy of 2½% was reimposed.

In spite of the Emperor's instructions, the merchants were often charged more than the prescribed customs. We find the foreign merchants complaining about the custom dues. The English in 1615 complained that three separate duties were collected on goods brought from Ahmedabad into Surat. Time and again the English and the Dutch obtained **farmans** for the exemption of customs, but they were made to pay duties at the custom-houses. Apart from the Mughal territory, the autonomous chieftains also levied customs and duties on goods passing through their territories. Moreland says that it is not possible to define the burden on commerce in quantitative terms, since any one might claim a tax of any amount, even if goods had paid taxes in an adjoining jurisdiction.

Apart from customs, another tax called **rahdari** or transit tax was collected. This was a road-toll collected on goods passing through various territories. Though the amount at each place was small, the cumulative charge became heavy. Even the **zamindars** used to collect tolls on goods passing through their territories.

According to one contemporary account of the 17th century (Khafi Khan), **rahdari** was considered illegal but large amounts were collected from merchants and traders. This tax was collected on river routes also.

#### Income from Mints

The tax generated at mints was another source of income for the Empire. The state mint-fee was called **mahsul-i darul zarb**. The charges were around 5% of the value of the money minted. Besides, two other charges were also collected. These were **rusum-i ahlikaran** (perquisites of officials) and **ujrat-i karigaran** (wages of artisans).

## 20.2.2 Mechanism of Collection

Like land revenue there was a well organised machinery for collection of these taxes. The effort of the state was to keep separate accounts for the income from land revenue and other taxes. For this purpose, the taxes were classified into two **mal o jihat** and **sair jihat**. The former related to land revenue and the latter to taxes charged on merchandise and trading. For the convenience of assessment and collection, separate fiscal divisions called **mahalat I sair** or **sair mahals** were created in big cities and towns. The **mahal** was a purely fiscal division and was different from the **pargana** which was both a revenue and territorial division.

The **Ain-i Akbari** gives separate revenue figures for towns and **sair mahals** for places like Ahmedabad, Lahore, Multan and Broach, etc. In case of Bengal, these market dues are separately mentioned in the **A'in**. In most of the 17th century revenue tables, the **sair mahal** figures for each town are given separately. For example: the list given for Surat contains revenue **mahals** such as **mahal farza**, **mahal khushki**, **mahal namakzar**, **mahal chabutra-i kotwali**, **mahal dallali**, **jauhari wa manhari**, **mahal darul zarb**, **mahal ghalla mandi** and **mahal jahazat**.

These revenue districts were either given in **jagir** or their collections were sent to the state treasury. Except custom houses and mints, most of the officers responsible for the collection of taxes carried the same designations as land revenue officials (**amin**, **karori**, **qanungo**, **chaudhari**).

Ports had a separate set of officers, The **mutasaddi** was the chief official or superintendent of port. He was directly appointed by the Emperor and was responsible for the collection of taxes. The rates of commodities in the market were fixed according to the prices settled by merchants at the custom-house.

The **Mutasaddi** had a number of officials working under him who assisted him in valuation and realization of custom dues and maintaining accounts. Some of them were the **mushrif**, **tahwildar**, and **darogha-i Khazana**. These also were directly appointed by the court. A large number of peons and porters were also attached to custom-houses.

In the absence of relevant data it is difficult to calculate the net amount collected. It has been estimated by Shireen Moosvi that the share of these taxes was around 10% of the total income of the state.

### Check your Progress 1

- 1) List the main taxes other than land revenue.  
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- 2) How the **rahdari** and custom tax were collected?  
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## 20.3 CURRENCY SYSTEM

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Under the Mughals, the currency system was very well organised. A high level of purity of metals was also achieved.

### 20.3.1 The Coinage

The Mughal currency system may be termed as trimetallic. Coins were of three

metals, viz, copper, silver and gold. However, the silver coin was the base of the currency.

The silver coin has a long pre Mughal history. It was used during Delhi Sultanate for long as **tanka**. Sher Shah for the first time standardized the silver coin. It was called **rupaya** and had a weight of 178 grains (troy) (troy weight is a British system of weights used for gold, silver and jewels in which 1 pound = 12 ounces = 5760 grains). For minting purposes, an alloy was added which was kept below 4 percent of the weight of the coin. Akbar continued the **rupaya** as the basic currency with more or less the same weight. Under Aurangzeb the weight of the **rupaya** was increased to 180 grains (troy). The silver **rupaya** was the main coin used for business and revenue transactions.

The Mughals issued a gold coin called **ashrafi** or **muhr**. It weighed 169 grains (troy). This coin was not commonly used in commercial transactions. It was mainly used for hoarding purposes and also for giving in gift.

The most common coin used for small transactions was the copper **dam** which weighed around 323 grains. The weight of the copper **dam** was reduced by one third during Aurangzeb's reign presumably because of the shortage of copper.

Further, for very petty transactions **kauris** (see-shells) were used in coastal areas. These were brought mainly from the Maldivian islands. Around 2500 **kauris** equalled a **rupaya**.

Apart from the silver **rupaya** other types of coins were also used. The most important of these were **mahmudis**, a long standing silver coin of Gujarat. Even after the establishment of the Mughal rule in Gujarat it continued to be minted and used in Gujarat for commercial transaction.

In the Vijaynagar Empire, a gold coin called **hun** or **pagoda** was used. After the disintegration of Vijaynagar, its circulation continued in the kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkunda. In many Deccan kingdoms, an alloy of copper and silver called **tanka** was in use. After the expansion of the Mughals in Deccan a number of mints were established in that region to produce Mughal silver coins.

#### Exchange Value of Coins

The exchange value of gold, silver and copper coins kept fluctuating depending on the supply of these metals in the market. The silver value of gold kept fluctuating throughout the Mughal period, ranging from 10 to 14 **rupaya** for one gold coin.

As for copper coin, taking 1595 as the base year, Irfan Habib shows that by the early 1660s it rose to 2.5 times, but by 1700 it came down to the double and again by 1750 it reached the level of the 1660s.

For transaction purposes during Akbar's period, 40 copper **dams** were considered equal to one **rupaya**. After his death, as the rate of copper appreciated sharply, this ratio could not be maintained. Since all the land revenue assessment and calculations were done in **dams**, it became necessary to use it as notional fractional units of **rupaya**. Silver coins of small fractions called **ana** were also used. It was one-sixteenth of a rupee.

In the above account, we have not gone into the details of the complexities and the debates among historians about the Mughal currency system. We have only tried to present before you in a simplified manner the basic features of Mughal coinage.

### 20.3.2 The Minting System

The Mughals had a free coinage system. One could take bullion to the mint and get it coined. The state had the sole authority to issue coins and no other person could issue them. A very strict standardization was followed to maintain the purity of coins.

A large number of mints were established throughout the Empire. Attempts were made to have these mints in big towns and ports so that the imported bullion could be taken to mints easily. Every coin carried the name of the issuing mint, and the year of minting and ruler's name.

The newly minted coin in the current or previous year was called **taza sikka** (newly minted). The coins issued and in circulation in the reign of an emperor were called **chalani** (current). While the coins minted in the earlier reigns were called **khazana**. Except for the **taza** all other coins were subjected to reduction in value.

A certain amount was deducted on the value of the coin for successive years from the year of issue. If a coin was for more than one year in circulation around 3 per cent was deducted; if it was for more than 2 years then 5 per cent was to be reduced.

Apart from the factor of age, a deduction in the value was made on account of the loss of weight of coin. Abul Fazl says that if the loss of the weight was less than one **rati** it was to be overlooked and the coin was treated as standard. If the loss of weight was between 1 and 2 **ratis**, a deduction of two and a half per cent was made; and if it exceeded 2 **ratis** the coin was treated as bullion.

The above stated deductions were decided by state, but in actual practice arbitrary deductions were decided by **sarafs** (money changers) depending on the market.

### Working of Mints

Any person desirous of getting money minted was to carry bullion or old currency for reminting to a mint. The quality and purity of the metal was scrutinized. The currency was minted and delivered to the concerned person. A specific sum was charged as minting charges. This amounted to around 5.6% of the bullion minted.

In the process of minting a large number of personnel and craftsmen were involved.

A mint was headed by an officer called **darogha** | **darul zarb**. The duties of this officer were to supervise the overall working of the mint. He was assisted by a number of officials, skilled artisans and workmen. The **sarraf** was employed by the mint as assessor. He was to judge the purity, weight and age of the coin and fix deductions on their value. The **mushrif** was to maintain accounts. The **tahwildar** kept accounts of daily profit and kept coins and bullion in safe custody. The **muhr kan** (engraver) was a person who engraved and made dies. The **Wazan kash** (weightman) weighed the coins. There were many artisans like the **zarrab** (coin maker), **sikkachi** (stamper), etc.

It is difficult to estimate the output of mints because it depended on the size of the mint and the commercial activities of the area where the mint operated. By the close of the 17th century, the output of Surat mint was estimated around 30,000 **rupaya** per day. Aziza Hasan studied the pattern of the issue of coins in 16th & 17th century. According to her estimates in 1639 the total rupees in circulation were three times than that of 1591. After 1639 there is a decline and by 1684 the total was double of 1591. After 1684 there is an ascent again and by 1700 the total coins in circulation were three times than those of 1591.

### Location of Mints

Abul Fazl gives a list of mints in the **Ain-i Akbari**. According to him, copper coins were issued by forty-two mints, silver coins by fourteen and gold coins by four mints. The number of mints issuing silver coins increased by the end of the 17th century to forty.

M.P. Singh has compiled a detailed list of mints on the basis of a large number of numismatic sources. According to him, a large number of mints which figure on coins do not find a mention in either the **A'in** or other literary sources. We reproduce below the list prepared by him.

Reign	No. of mints coining gold, silver and copper.	No. of mints coining gold only.	No. of mints coining gold and silver.	No. of mints coining gold and copper	No. of mints coining silver only.	No. of mints coining silver and copper.	No. of mints coining copper only	Total
Akbar	13	4	3	1	14	14	35	84
Jahangir	6	2	7	—	11	3	3	32

Shahjahan	10	1	12	—	13	—	5	41	Fiscal and Monetary System, Prices
Aurangzeb	18	1	24	—	36	3	3	85	

Source: M.P. Singh, *Town Market, Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire*, p. 173, 1985, Delhi.

At times, mints accompanied the Imperial camps also that issued coins en route.

## 20.4 PRICES

The prices for a large number of commodities are listed in the *Ain-i Akbari*. These prices generally relate to the Agra region around the end of the 16th century. For the subsequent period, there are no systematic records of prices for comparison purposes. For the seventeenth century, the prices available pertain to different areas of the Empire in different years. In such a situation, it becomes difficult to trace a definite trend in the movement of prices of different commodities throughout the Mughal period. Irfan Habib has studied the movement of prices in 16th and 17th centuries (*Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I). We give below a brief account of price movements as provided by Irfan Habib.

### Gold, Silver and Copper

We have already referred to the relative prices of these metals in sub-section. 20.3.1. Around 1580s, the value of gold to silver was 1: 9, by 1670s, after various fluctuations, it reached 1: 16, but it came down again to 1: 14 by 1750.

The silver price of copper coins also increased from the end of the 16th century to 1660s by 2.5 times; by 1700 it came down to double of the 16th century. Again by 1750 it rose to the level of 1660s.

### Agricultural Produce

The main problem in analysing the prices of food grains is that they had a lot of fluctuations and variations. The prices depended on the cultivation of the specific food grains in a particular region. Again, the prices varied due to the level of production in a particular year. There could be large variations in the prices of the same commodity at two places at the same time, depending on how far it was carried from the place where it was grown.

The prices of some food grains recorded in the *A'in* are given below;

Wheat per man (maund)	12 dams	sada Paddy per man	100 dams
black gram per man	8 dams	Dewzira Rice per man	90 dams
lentils gram per man	12 dams	Sathi rice per man	20 dams
barley gram per man	8 dams	Mash dal per man	16 dams
moth gram per man	12 dams	mung per man	18 dams

The prices of food grains doubled between 1595 and 1637. Between 1637 and 1670, the increase was about 15 to 20 per cent. By 1670 the prices were 230 per cent of 1595. A systematic data is available for Eastern Rajasthan. Here the agricultural prices show a small increase between 1660s and 1690s, but a sharp increase by the second decade of the 18th century. After this, they maintained a level more than twice of that in the 1690s.

### Sugar and Indigo

Two widely grown cashcrops in Mughal India were sugar and indigo. In northern India, the rise in the sugar prices is negligible till 1615; it rose to 140 per cent by 1630 and remained high till 1650s; while in Gujarat, the price of sugar doubled by 1620.

The price movement of indigo shows separate trends for two major varieties, i.e., Bayana indigo and Sarkhej indigo. The price for Bayana indigo given in the *A'in* (1595) is Rs. 16 per man-i Akbari. Till around the first quarter of the 17th century,

the prices remained more or less at this level. In the 1630s we notice a sudden rise which declined after a short period but remained much above than those of the 1620s. Again, there came a sharp rise in the 1660s which came down a bit but remained around 3 times than those of 1595.

The prices of the Sarkhej indigo increased by 1.5 times by 1620. By the 1630s, there was a sharp rise followed by a decline by the 1640s, but it remained at the double level compared to that of 1595. Fluctuations in indigo prices were affected by overseas demand also.

### Wages

The A'in-i Akbari provides figures for the wages of a large category of workers. In the absence of any such data for the 17th century, it is difficult to discover any definite wage trend over a period of time. The scattered figures for the 17th century do show that by 1637 an increase of 67 to 100 per cent takes place; but these are not enough to draw broad conclusions.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Write 5 lines on the system of minting under the Mughals.

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- 2) Write 5 lines on the management of mints.

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- 3) Comment briefly on the relative movement of prices in the 17th century.

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## 20.5 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit, we studied that, apart from land revenue, there were other sources for state's income. This income came from market taxes, customs, *rahdari*, mint charges etc.

The Mughal currency was trimetallic i.e., gold, silver and copper. The Mughal coinage was free and it was open to everybody to take the bullion to the mint. A large network of mints was established throughout the Empire. A high degree of purity and standardization was followed.

The movement of prices was four-fold in a period of 150 years. The annual rate of price rise was around 1.9 per cent. The quantitative data for wages is very limited. We get some detailed information on wages mainly from the A'in-i Akbari (1600).

## 20.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) You can write taxes collected from tools, mints and the sale of merchandise etc.,  
See Sub-sec. 20.2.1
- 2) See Sub-sec 20.2.2

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The Mughals had an open system of minting of coins. It was a trimetallic currency. See Sub-sec. 20.3.1 & 20.3.2
- 2) You should write about the officers of mints and their working. See Sub-sec 20.3.2
- 3) See Sec. 20.4



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## SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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<b>Irfan Habib</b>	<b>Agrarian System of Mughal India, Bombay, 1963 (Out of Print)</b>
<b>Tapan Ray Chaudhuri &amp; Irfan Habib</b>	<b>The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol-I</b>
<b>H. Fukazawa</b>	<b>The Medieval Deccan: Peasants, Social Systems and States 16th to 18th Centuries, Delhi, 1991</b>
<b>A.R. Kulkarni</b>	<b>Maharashtra in the Age of Shivaji, Poona, 1969</b>
<b>Burten Stein</b>	<b>The New Cambridge History of India, I (2) Vijaynagar</b>
<b>M.P. Singh</b>	<b>Town Market, Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire, Delhi, 1985</b>
<b>H.K. Sherwani &amp; P.M. Joshi</b>	<b>History of Medieval Deccan (1295-1724) in 2 Vols.</b>



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# UNIT 21 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

## Structure

- 21.0 Objectives
- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Extent of Cultivation
- 21.3 Means of Cultivation and Irrigation
  - 21.3.1 Means and Methods of Cultivation
  - 21.3.2 Means of Irrigation
- 21.4 Agricultural Produce
  - 21.4.1 Food Crops
  - 21.4.2 Cash Crops
  - 21.4.3 Fruits, Vegetables and Spices
  - 21.4.4 Productivity and Yields
- 21.5 Cattle and Livestock
- 21.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 21.7 Key Words
- 21.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

## 21.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with agricultural production in India during the period of this study. After going through this Unit you would

- have an idea about the extent of cultivation during the period under study;
- know about the means and methods of cultivation and irrigation;
- be able to list the main crops grown; and
- have some idea about the status of livestock and cattle breeding.

## 21.1 INTRODUCTION

India has a very large land area with diverse climatic zones. Throughout its history, agriculture has been its predominant productive activity. During the Mughal period, large tracts of land were under the plough. Contemporary Indian and foreign writers praise the fertility of Indian soil.

In this Unit, we will discuss many aspects including the extent of cultivation, that is the land under plough. A wide range of food crops, fruits, vegetables and cash crops were grown in India. However, we would take a stock only of the main crops grown during this period. We will also discuss the methods of cultivation as also the implements used for cultivation and irrigation technology. While focusing on the area under Mughal control, we will also include the areas lying outside it.

## 21.2 EXTENT OF CULTIVATION

In the absence of relevant data, it is difficult to find out the exact area under the plough. Nevertheless, the available data helps us to have an idea about the cultivable land during Mughal period.

Abul Fazl in his *Ain-i Akbari* provides area figures for all the Mughal provinces in North India except Bengal, Thatta and Kashmir. In the case of most of the provinces, like Delhi, Agra, Awadh, Lahore, Multan, Allahabad and Ajmer, separate figures are provided for each *pargana* (with a few exceptions).

The figures of the *Ain-i Akbari* belong to the year c. 1595. The area figures for the 17th century for various regions are available in an accountancy manual of A.D. 1686. The same figures have been reproduced in a historical work *Chahar Gulshan* (1739-40). This manual provides measured area figures for each province; total number of villages in each province and a break-up of measured and unmeasured villages.

As stated earlier, the **Ain** provides area figures in most cases for each **pargana** but it is difficult to say to what extent the **pargana** was actually measured. The set of figures available from Aurangzeb's reign provide a better picture. These show that almost fifty per cent of the villages were not measured till A.D. 1686.

The figures for Aurangzeb's reign show that the measured area increased compared to the **Ain** (1595). But it is difficult to say that the total increase in the measured area was due to extension of cultivation. This may as well have been due to the inclusion of some of the earlier unmeasured area under measurement.

There is a debate among historians as to what these measurement figures actually represent. The questions raised are: whether these figures are for the area actually under crop, or cultivable land or the total measured area? W.H. Moreland was of the view that these figures represent the total cropped area.

Irfan Habib holds that it would have included cultivable area which was not sown and also area under habitation, lakes, tanks, parts of forests, etc. Shireen Moosvi agrees with Irfan Habib and has calculated this cultivable waste as ten per cent of the measured area. But she feels that even after deducting this ten per cent, the remaining area cannot be taken as net cropped area because large tracts of cultivated areas were not measured. She also thinks that many a times the land under **kharif** and **rabi** crops was measured separately and, after adding the two, it was recorded as measured area. In such a situation, measurement figures of Mughal period alone are not of much help to ascertain the extent of cultivation. Irfan Habib and Shireen Moosvi have taken the help of other available data such as detailed figures of some areas available in some revenue papers, **jama** figures and **dastur** rates. These have been compared with the figures of actually cultivated area in the beginning of 20th century.

According to their estimates the cultivated area between the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 20th century almost doubled. The increase in Bihar, Awadh, and parts of Bengal is ascribed to the clearance of forest. In Punjab and Sind the spread of canal network also contributed to the extension in cultivation.

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## 21.3 MEANS OF CULTIVATION AND IRRIGATION

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The Indian peasant used a variety of implements and techniques for cultivation, depending on the nature of soil and need of the crops. Similarly, irrigation was done through various means in different regions.

### 21.3.1 Means and Methods of Cultivation

Tillage was performed by harnessing a pair of oxen to the plough. The latter was made of wood with an iron ploughshare. Unlike in Europe neither horse nor bullock-drawn wheeled plough nor mould board were ever used in India. Regional variations, in a sprawling country like India, in the size and weight of ploughs must be expected—from a light plough that could be carried by the tiller upon his shoulders, to the heavy one meant for harder soil. Again, for soft soil, the iron ploughshare or coulter could have been dispensed with, more so as the price of iron was high. Many contemporary European travellers noted with surprise that Indian plough just turned the soil and that deep digging was not done, it seems that this suited to Indian conditions because deep digging would result in the loss of moisture in the soil. Moreover, it was only the upper layer which was more fertile.

A separate devise was used for breaking the clods or lumps of earth. This was done with the help of wooden boards called **patella** in parts of north India. Like plough this flat board was also harnessed to a pair of oxen. Generally a man would stand on the board to provide weight. The **patella** was dragged on the field by oxen.

The sowing of seeds was generally done through scattering by hand. In 16th century Barbosa also refers to the use of a sort of seed drill in the coastal region for sowing rice.

Efforts were made to increase the fertility of the soil through artificial means. In South India flocks of goat and sheep were widely used. Generally flocks of these cattle were made to spend a few nights in the agricultural field for their droppings were considered good manure. It was assumed that if a flock of 1000 spend five or six nights in one **kani** of land (1.32 acres) it was enough to keep land fertile for 6 to 7 years. (**Cambridge Economic History of India**, I, p. 231.) The same practice was commonly used in Northern India also. Fish manure also seems to have been used in coastal areas.

Rotation of crops was used for the optimum utilisation of land throughout the year. It was also considered good to maintain the productivity of the soil. Peasants through the experience of generations had acquired some knowledge of using rotation of crops for the good of the soil. They would decide which crop to be replaced by another in a particular field for a better yield.

A semi circular sickle was used for cutting the crop.

The harvested crop was spread on the ground for threshing. Our sources refer to two methods: in the first method the crop was beaten with sticks; in the second method the animals were made to move on the spread out crop. The weight and movement of the animals treaded the grain.

The threshed out matter was put in open baskets and the contents were thrown outside the basket at a controlled speed. The chaff got scattered by the wind and the grain fell on the ground.

### 21.3.2 Means of Irrigation

Indian agriculture was heavily dependent on rains for irrigation needs. The major criterion for selecting the crops for sowing was availability of rain water in a particular region. Apart from rain water, a number of devices were used for artificial irrigation.

Well-irrigation was the most common method employed throughout the length and breadth of the country. A number of methods were used to lift water from wells depending on the watertable and technology available.

Various methods used for lifting water have been discussed in Block 6 of course EHI-03. Here we will give only a brief description of water lifting devices.

In the Northern plains both masonry and non-masonry wells were dug. The non-masonry wells were not durable and some digging was required every year.

The masonry wells were durable and were suitable for fixing better water lifting devices. The masonry wells had raised walls and enclosures or platforms. Both bricks and stones were used to construct wells. These wells were usually set inside with terracotta rings. These are also known as ring wells.

A number of devices were used for lifting water from the wells.

- i) The most simple method was to draw water with rope and bucket by hand without any mechanical aid. Due to its limited capacity this device could not have been used for irrigating large fields.
- ii) The second method was the employment of pulleys over the wells. The same rope and bucket was used over the pulley to lift the water. With the help of pulley larger amounts of water could be drawn with less effort than our first method. Both the above devices were used for the supply of water in domestic use or for irrigating small plots.
- iii) In the third method the rope-pulley was used with the addition of the employment of a pair of oxen. The use of animal power in this method helped in irrigating larger areas.
- iv) The fourth device worked on a lever principle. In this method a long rope is lashed to the fork of an upright beam or trunk of a tree to put it in a swinging position. The bucket was fastened to rope tied on one end of the pole. The pole's other end carried a weight heavier than filled bucket. One person is required to operate it.
- v) The fifth method required the use of a wheel. In its earlier form the pots were attached to rims of the wheels which was to rotate with the help of animal power. It was used to lift water from shallow surface and was of no use for wells.

The use of wheel for lifting water from well was also made. In this form a garland of pots was used with 3 wheels, a gear mechanism and animal power. (For details see Block 6 of EHI-03.) With the help of this device regular supply of large amounts of water could be ensured for irrigating large fields. This was also helpful for lifting water from deep wells. The complex machine and animal power would have made the device expensive. It therefore would have been accessible to the peasants with substantial means.

Lakes, tanks and reservoirs of water were also used uniformly in all parts of the country. In South India, this was the most prevalent method used for irrigation. Here the dams were made over the rivers. Construction of such reservoirs was beyond individual means. It was therefore the responsibility of state, local chiefs and temple management to create such facilities. The massive Madag lake built by Vijaynagar rulers is a marvel of civil engineering of the time. It was built on the Tungabhadra with three earth embankments to bridge the gaps in the hills. When full, this lake was 10-15 miles long. Each of the three embankments had sluices built of huge slabs of hewn stones.

Rajasthan is another region where large reservoirs for storing water abound. The Dhebar lake in Mewar, according to the *Ain-i Akbari*, has a circumference of 36 miles. The Udaisagar is said to have a circumference of 12 miles; Rajsamand and Jaisamand were other important lakes built in Mewar in the 17th century. Similar reservoirs created with the help of dams in Marwar and Amber regions were Balsan and Mansagar respectively.

Almost every cluster of villages had smaller reservoirs and lakes where rain water was stored. Our sources inform us that in the 1650s, Mughal administration proposed to advance Rs. 40,000 to 50,000 to the cultivators in Khandesh and Berar for erecting dams for irrigation. It is interesting to note that a wide network of such small dams in Khandesh is still in use, and they cover the basins of the five major rivers in this region, viz., Mosam, Girna, Ken, Panjbra, and Shivan.

In Northern plains, canals figure prominently as a means of irrigation. We have read about canals constructed by Sultan Firoz Tughluq during 14th century in Block 6 of EHI-03. The trend seems to have continued under the Mughals. The *Nahr Faiz* built during Shah Jahan's reign was around 150 miles in length. It carried the water from the *Yamuna* to a large area. Another canal, around 100 miles long, was cut from the river Ravi near Lahore. Remains of a number of canals are available in the whole Indus delta. Irfan Habib is of the opinion that the main deficiency of Mughal canals was that they did not often run above the surrounding plain, and so the water that could be obtained from them for irrigation was limited to what could be lifted from them. The network of canals in the region kept on increasing. Canals are not reported from South India.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Write three lines on plough used during Mughal India.

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- 2) List three methods used for increasing fertility of soil.

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- 3) List three methods used for lifting water from the wells for irrigating fields.

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4) Name four major lakes or dams used for irrigation.

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## 21.4 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

India with extensive land area, different types of soils and varying climatic conditions, could boast of a large variety of agricultural products. For the convenience of study, we will discuss agricultural produce under three heads—food crops, cash crops and fruits, vegetables and spices.

### 21.4.1 Food Crops

The majority of seasonal crops in North India were grown in two major crop seasons **kharif** (autumn) and **rabi** (spring). In some areas the peasants tended to grow even three crops by producing some short-term crops in between. Rice was the main **kharif** crop and wheat was **rabi**. In South India, these distinct crop-seasons with different crops were absent. Here, on wet lands one paddy (rice) crop was in the fields from June/July to December/January and another from January/February to April/May. In North Arcot, dry crops (kumbu, red gram, horse gram, castor) were sown from May to September/October and harvested from August to December/January on the wet lands, in August/September the ragi and cholam and in February/March the paddy crop, were harvested. (Cambridge Economic History of India, I, p. 229.)

Rice and wheat were the two major food crops throughout the country. The regions with high rainfall (40" to 50") accounted for the bulk of rice production. The whole of Northeast, Eastern India (Bihar, Bengal, Orissa with parts of Eastern U.P.), southern coast of Gujarat and South India, were rice producing areas. As indicated above, in South India there were two main seasons of rice cultivation **kuddapah-kar** and **samba-peshanam**. They were named after the variety of rice cultivated during the summer and winter seasons.

Rice cultivation is also reported from irrigated areas of Punjab and Deccan. Every region had its own variety of coarse to ordinary to fine quality of rice. Regions of Bengal and Bihar produced the finest quality of rice.

Like rice, wheat also had specific regions. Punjab, Sind, Western Uttar Pradesh and other regions with little rainfall produced wheat. References to its production in Bihar, Gujarat, Deccan and even some parts of Bengal are also available.

Apart from these two major crops, barley was grown extensively in the Central plains. The **Ain-i Akbari** refers to barley production in Allahabad, Awadh, Agra, Ajmer, Delhi, Lahore and Multan, etc.

Millet is reported with some exceptions mainly from wheat producing zones. **Jowar** and **bajra** were the two main millets.

Pulses are reported from different regions. Important ones are **gram, arhar, moong, moth, urd** and **khisari** (the latter was grown extensively in Bihar and the regions of present Madhya Pradesh). However, Abul Fazl says that its consumption was injurious to health. The same is confirmed by modern researches.

It was believed for long that maize (**makai** or **makka**) was not known in India during 17th century. Some recent works establish beyond doubt that it was grown definitely in Rajasthan and Maharashtra and possibly other regions also during the second half of the 17th century.

### 21.4.2 Cash Crops

Crops grown mainly for the market are commonly termed as cash crops. These are referred in Persian records as **jinsi kamil** or **jinsi ala** (superior grade crops). Unlike seasonal food crops, these occupied the fields almost the whole year. The major cash crops in 16th-17th centuries were sugarcane, cotton, indigo and opium.

All these crops were known in India from historical times. However, in the 17th century their demand increased due to enhanced manufacturing and commercial activities. During this period, a large foreign market also opened for these commodities. The Indian peasant, quick to follow the market demand, increased the cultivation of these crops.

Sugarcane was the most widely grown cash crop of the period. The *Ain-i Akbari* records it in most of the *dastur* circles of Agra, Awadh, Lahore, Multan and Allahabad. Sugar from Bengal was considered to be the best in quality. Multan, Malwa, Sind, Khandesh, Berar and regions of South India all testify to the presence of sugarcane in the 17th century.

Another cash crop grown throughout the country was cotton. The region with large scale cultivation were parts of the present day Maharashtra, Gujarat and Bengal. Contemporary sources refer to its cultivation in Ajmer, Allahabad, Awadh, Bihar, Multan, Thatta (Sind), Lahore and Delhi.

Indigo was another cash crop widely cultivated under the Mughals. The plant yielded a blue dye (*neel*) which was much in demand in India and European markets. Its presence is recorded in the *dastur* circles of Awadh, Allahabad, Ajmer, Delhi, Agra, Lahore, Multan and Sind. Its cultivation is referred in Gujarat, Bihar, Bengal, Malwa and Coromandal in South India and Deccan.

The varieties high in demand were those of Bayana and Sarkhej. Bayana, a place near Agra, was considered as producing the best quality of indigo and fetched high price. Sarkhej, near Ahmedabad, was considered second in quality and also fetched a high price. Other notable places for quality indigo were regions around Khurja and Aligarh (in U.P.), Sehwan (in Sind) and Telingana (in Deccan).

Cultivation of opium is reported from a number of places in India. The Mughal provinces of Bihar and Malwa seem to have produced good opium. It was also cultivated in Awadh, Bihar, Delhi, Agra, Multan, Lahore, Bengal, Gujarat, Marwar, and Mewar in Rajasthan.

Cultivation of tobacco seems to have spread in India in a short time. The *Ain-i Akbari* does not mention it as a crop in any of the *dastur* circles or other regions. It seems to have been introduced in India during the 16th century by the Portuguese. Its cultivation was noticed in almost all parts of the country (specially in Surat and Bihar).

Cultivation of coffee seems to have started during the second half of the 17th century while tea does not figure during the period of our study as a common beverage.

*San* or sunn-hemp, a fibre yielding plant, was cultivated in all the core provinces of the Mughal empire (Awadh, Allahabad, Agra, Lahore, Ajmer, etc.).

Sericulture (rearing of silkworms on a mulberry plant) was carried on in Bengal, Assam, Kashmir and western coast. However, Bengal was the main region of production.

The plants whose seeds were used for extracting oil come under the category of food as well as cash crops. The main oil yielding crops listed are rapeseed, castor, linseed. Rapeseed is reported in all provinces from Allahabad to Multan as also in Bengal. Cultivation of other oilseed plants was relatively less widespread.

### 21.4.3 Fruits, Vegetables and Spices

Horticulture seems to have reached new heights during the Mughal period. The Mughal Emperors and the nobles planted lavish orchards. Almost every noble of consequence had his gardens on the outskirts of the towns where they resided. Orchards and groves were laid down with careful planning. A number of fruits available today were introduced in India during 16th and 17th centuries. Pineapple (anannas) is one such fruit which was brought from Latin America and introduced in India by the Portuguese. In a short period of time it became popular and was extensively cultivated all over the country.

Papaya and cashew-nuts were also introduced through the same agency, but their spread was a bit slow. Leechi and guava seem to have been introduced later. Cherries were brought from Kabul and grown in Kashmir through grafting. The practice of grafting was in order to improve the quality of a number of fruits. Quality of oranges

other types of citrus fruits, apricots, mangoes and a host of other fruits was greatly improved through grafting. Coconut was grown not only along the coastal region but also inland.

Seeds of different variety of melons and grapes were brought from Kabul and successfully grown in the gardens of Emperors and nobles. Ordinary melons were grown everywhere on riverbeds by the peasants.

A large variety of vegetables were grown all over the country. The **Ain-i Akbari** provides a long list of vegetables in use at that time. Potato and Tomato seem to have been introduced in the 17th century and after.

For centuries India was known for its spices. The Southern coast of India witnessed large scale spice export to various regions in Asia and Europe. Pepper, clove, cardamom were plentiful. Ginger and Turmeric were grown extensively. The Dutch and English purchased large quantities for export. Saffron grown in Kashmir was celebrated for its colour and flavour. **Pan** (betel leaf) was produced in many areas. The **Maghi Pan** of Bihar and various other varieties from Bengal were famous. Betel-nut was also produced in coastal regions.

Large forest tracts supplied a number of commercially important products. Lignum used for medicinal purpose and **lakh** were exported in large quantities.

#### 21.4.4 Productivity and Yields

Shireen Moosvi has worked out the productivity of crops and per **bigha** yields for Mughal India (**Economy of the Mughal Empire**, Chapter 3). In this section, we will be providing information based mainly on her researches. The **Ain-i Akbari** provides schedules of crop yield and revenue rates for **zabti** provinces (Lahore, Multan, Agra, Allahabad, Awadh and Delhi). For each crop yields are provided separately for high, middling and low categories. An average yield can be worked out on the basis of these. However, Abul Fazl does not inform us what was the basis of the three categories. It seems that the low yields are those of non-irrigated land while the rest two are for irrigated fields.

Shireen Moosvi has worked out the agricultural productivity on the basis of various data available from the 16th century records. According to her estimates the yields (average of high, middling and low yields) for some major crops were as follows:

Average Crop Yields — 1595-96  
(man-i Akbari per bigha-i Ilahi)

Wheat	— 13.49	Barley	— 12.93	Gram	— 9.71
Bajra	— 5.02	Jowar	— 7.57	Cotton	— 5.75
Sugarcane	— 11.75	Mustard	— 5.13	Sesame	— 4.00

(**Economy of the Mughal Empire c. 1595. A statistical study**, p. 82)

Shireen Moosvi has also compared the yields of the **Ain-i Akbari** with yields around the close of the 19th century. She finds that on the whole there is no major change in the productivity of food crops between the two periods. However, in case of cash crops a definite increase in the productivity in the 19th century can be noticed.

## 21.5 CATTLE AND LIVESTOCK

The cattle played a very important role in agricultural production of our period. They were employed in important agricultural activities like ploughing and irrigation, and their dung was used for manuring. Besides, dairy products contributed substantially to the agriculture-related production. The peasants in general along with some specialised castes were involved in the rearing of cattle.

Large scale involvement of cattle in agricultural operations suggests the presence of large cattle population. With high land-man ratio, grazing fields would have been available in abundance. Contemporary European travellers refer to large numbers of cattle in Indian fields. Irfan Habib suggests that the per capita cattle population in



Mughal India compares favourably with modern statistics. Abundance of butter or ghee is said to be the diet of the common people; this also suggests a large cattle population. Oxen were used for transporting goods as packanimals or for bullock carts. The **banjaras** (migrant trading community) are said to have maintained flocks of a few hundred to thousand animals. Flocks of thousands of sheep and goats were also reared.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) List six main food crops

- i) .....
- ii) .....
- iii) .....
- iv) .....
- v) .....
- vi) .....

2) What are food crops, cash crops and oil yielding crops?

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3) List four major cash crops

- i) .....
- ii) .....
- iii) .....
- iv) .....

4) List four fruits brought to India from outside

- i) .....
- ii) .....
- iii) .....
- iv) .....

**21.6 LET US SUM UP**

Contemporary foreign observers remark about the primitiveness and simplicity of agricultural implements, but they were well suited to the needs of Indian agriculture. Agriculture was dependent mainly on rain water, but means and methods of artificial irrigation were also employed. Wells fitted with various devices like, **dhenkli**, **charas** and **saqiya** (Persian Wheel) to lift water, and tanks, reservoirs and to, a limited extent, canals were the main source for irrigation.

The Indian peasants raised a number of food and cash crops. Some land was used for two or more crops. Rotation of crops and cultivation of cash crops according to market needs was a special feature of the period. Production of fruits both in quality and quantity reached new heights.

The productivity and yield of crops compares well with the late 19th century modern yields and productions. Cattle and livestock seem to have higher per capita population in Mughal period.

**21.7 KEY WORDS**

- Bigha-i Ilahi** : the area of 60 square **gaz-i Ilahi** (yards of Akbar), the length of **gaz-i Ilahi** was around 32 inches. One **bigha-i Ilahi** was around .60 of an acre.
- Dastur Circles** : the territory within which some cash revenue rates were applied for different crops, the whole province was divided into number of **dastur** circles with separate revenue rates.
- Dartur rates** : cash revenue rates for different crops per unit of area.
- Jama** : the estimated income.

**Ploughshare/coulter** : the pointed tip of the plough which was used for digging the ground. It was made up of iron or hardwood.

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## 21.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Generally light plough drawn by oxen was used. See Sub-sec. 21.3.1.
- 2) You can write use of various types of manure and rotation of crops etc. See Sub-sec. 21.3.1.
- 3) Read Sub-sec. 21.3.2. You can leave out methods which were employed to draw smaller quantities. See Sub-sec. 21.3.2.
- 4) See Sub-sec. 21.3.2.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Read Sub-sec 21.4.1 and answer.
- 2) Cash crops were those crops which were grown mainly to be sold in market. While foodcrops were for self consumption and market, the oil yielding crops were grown to extract edible oils. See Sec. 21.4.
- 3) See Sub-sec. 21.4.2.
- 4) See Sub-sec. 21.4.3.



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# UNIT 22 NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

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## Structure

- 22.0 Objectives
- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Agro-based Production
  - 22.2.1 Textiles
  - 22.2.2 Indigo
  - 22.2.3 Sugar, Oil, etc.
- 22.3 Minerals, Mining and Metals
  - 22.3.1 Mineral Production
  - 22.3.2 Metals
- 22.4 Wood-based Crafts
- 22.5 Miscellaneous Crafts
- 22.6 Organisation of Production
- 22.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 22.0 OBJECTIVES

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During the period of our study, India had a high level of craft production. After going through this unit you would :

- know the various types of articles manufactured in India;
- be able to list the main centres of specific crafts;
- have an idea about the minerals found in various parts of the country;
- know about the techniques used in production of a few commodities; and
- have some idea about the organisation of production in certain crafts.

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## 22.1 INTRODUCTION

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India had a high level of craft production during the period of our study. This craft production was linked with the pattern of trade and commerce. We find that the manufacturing activity was brisk in and around the main commercial centres.

The Persian chronicles provide limited information about the crafts and techniques of production. European travellers and documents and correspondence of various European trading companies supply more detailed information. These companies were keen observers of the process of production and the quality of production.

Craft production was basically governed by the demand and consumption in the home market. The increase in demand in overseas markets in the 17th Century was so great that it started influencing the production activity.

In this unit, we will take into account the major crafts, their centres, raw materials used and, wherever possible, the techniques of production. We will also discuss the availability of minerals and their production. We will also analyse the organisation of production in some selected crafts.

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## 22.2 AGRO-BASED PRODUCTION

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It should be noted that the term agro-based industries in the present time is used altogether for a different type of industries. We are using it here simply to indicate the crafts where raw material came from agricultural produce.

The most wide-spread production of commodities during the period of our study was in a sector where the basic raw material was obtained from agricultural produce. As

noticed in Unit 21, India had a high level of production of cash crops like cotton, sugarcane, indigo, tobacco, etc. It was, therefore, natural that crafts related to these would flourish. Let us first discuss the textile production.

### 22.2.1 Textiles

Under the textiles we will mainly study the manufacture of cotton, silk and wool cloth.

#### Cotton

Cotton textiles were manufactured practically all over the country since with the exception of sub-Himalayan region, cotton could be grown almost everywhere. Abul Fazl gives a list of important centres of production of cotton textiles.

Gujarat emerges as one of the important region of textile manufacture. Here the main centres were Ahmedabad, Broach, Baroda, Cambay, Surat, etc. In Rajasthan we could mention Ajmer, Sironj and many small towns. In U.P., Lucknow and a number of small towns around it, Banaras, Agra, Allahabad, etc. were prominent centres. Other areas in the north like Delhi, Sirhind, Samana, Lahore, Sialkot, Multan and Thatta produced textiles of good quality. In Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Sonargaon and Dacca, Rajmahal, Qasimbazar and a number of towns, Balasore, Patna and a number of small towns around it were famous textile centres.

In Deccan, Burhanpur and Aurangabad produced cotton cloth of a fine variety. On the western coast of Maharashtra Chaul and Bhivandi had a flourishing weaving industry. The Qutab Shahi kingdom was also famous for its textiles. Masulipatnam and Coromandal also produced cotton textiles. In the South, Coimbatore and Malabar were also known for producing good quality cotton.

Many centres specialised in producing only yarn which was taken to weaving centres and even exported. Spinning of yarn thus became a specialised occupation. In and around all the major centres of textile production, many peasants and women took it up as an additional source of earning and supplied yarn to weavers.

Women in large number spun yarn in Mysore, Vizagapatam and Ganjam. Broach, Qasimbazar and Balasore were prominent markets for selling yarn. Gujarat supplied yarn to Bengal in the second half of the seventeenth century.

The fine yarn required for Dacca muslin was spun by young women with the help of **takli** or spindle.

There was a considerable variation in quality. Hameeda Naqvi has listed forty-nine varieties of clothes, produced in five major production centres of the Mughal Empire. The European accounts mention more than one hundred names. It is very difficult to list all the varieties of cotton textiles produced in the country. Every region had their own specialities.

A few important varieties may be explained here. **Bafta** is described in the **Ain-i Akbari** as a type of high quality calico normally white or of a single colour. The word calico was commonly used by Europeans for all kinds of cotton cloth. It also meant white cloth of a thick variety. **Tafta** was a silk cloth some times inter-woven with cotton yarn. **Zartari** was a cloth which was inter-woven with gold or silver thread. Muslin was a very fine quality of thin cloth. **Chintz (Chheent)** was cotton cloth with floral or other patterns printed or painted. **Khasa** was a kind of muslin. It was expensive cloth of a fine quality. (Irfan Habib has provided a detailed glossary of textile terms, see **An Atlas of the Mughal Empire**, pp. 69-70.)

Some clothes were named after the place of production, such as Dariabadi and Khairabadi, Samianas (Samana), Lakhowries (Lakhovar near Patna), etc. Some regions specialised in a particular variety, **Bafta** from Gujarat and muslin from Sonargaon and thereafter from Dacca in Bengal are examples of this specialization. In the seventeenth century, significant changes were noticed due to the intensified activities of the European trading companies whose numbers now increased with the arrival of the English, Dutch and French East India Companies, etc.

However, the most common cotton cloth much in demand was superior quality white calico cloth called by different names such as **Ambartees** (in Bihar, Bengal etc.), **Bafta** in Gujarat, etc. Other famous varieties were fine muslin of Bengal called **Khasa**, **Chintz**, a printed cloth and fabric made with mixing silk yarn. Ahmedabad acquired fame for its printed cloth known as **chintz (Chheent)**.

The manufacture of cotton textiles involved a number of steps. The first was ginning, that is, separating seeds from cotton. Later, the carder (**dhuniya**) cleaned cotton with the bowstring. Next, yarn was spun on the spinning wheel. The yarn was used on looms by the weavers. The most common loom was horizontal, the pit-loom with foot treadles.

The cloth thus woven was as yet in a raw state. The next step was to get it bleached or dyed before being used. These functions were performed by a separate group of people. Though these processes were performed everywhere, some centres became prominent. Broach in Gujarat was supposed to be the best bleaching place because of the special quality of its water. The English East India Company sent **baftas** purchased in Agra, Lahore, etc. to Broach and Nausari (Gujarat) for bleaching before exporting them. Ahmedabad, Surat, Patna, Sonargaon, Dacca, Masulipatam, etc., were other towns where textiles were bleached in large quantities.

Bleaching involved soaking of cloth (as in fine fabrics) or boiling it in a special solution. After this it was washed and dried. Indigo was used for bleaching (whitening).

Dyeing and printing also became specialized profession. **Rangrez** (dyers) had specialised in it and were considered a separate caste. Vegetable dyes were generally used. Red dye was produced by **chay** or lac and blue by using indigo.

### Silk

Silk was another important item for the manufacture of textiles. Abul Fazl mentions Kashmir where abundant silk textile was produced. Patna and Ahmedabad were known for silk fabrics. Banaras was equally famous. In the seventeenth century, Bengal produced the largest amount of raw silk which was exported abroad as well as to other parts of India. In Bengal silk fabrics were manufactured at Qasimbazar and Murshidabad. Around the middle of the 17th century, the total annual production was estimated around 2.5 million pounds. Around .75 million pounds were carried away in raw form by the Dutch alone. In 1681, the London silk weavers petitioned to the British Parliament to ban its import by the English East India Company. The import of Bengal silk fabrics was stopped in 1701. Nevertheless, Bengal remained the premier centre in India for producing silk textiles and raw silk.

### Wool

Wool was another important material used for manufacturing textiles. The most famous was the Kashmiri shawl, exported all over the world. The fine wool used in these shawls was imported from Tibet. Akbar promoted its manufacture at Lahore but it could not match the quality of Kashmiri shawls. Finer varieties of woolen textiles were generally brought in by the Europeans for the upper classes. Blankets were made from wool almost all over North India.

Other textile items included cotton **durries**, carpets (of silk and wool), tents and quilts, etc. Carpet weaving was yet another branch of textile production. Bihar (Daudnagar, Obra, etc.), Delhi, Agra, Lahore and Mirzapur were famous centres in the north. Warangal in the south was also famous for carpet weaving. The carpet weaving was also done in Masulipatam along the Caromandal coast. The output of carpet weaving was not very large and Persian carpets continued to be in use. Akbar took special interest in developing the manufacture of silk carpets in the royal **Karkhana** after the Persian variety.

The tents used mostly by royal establishment and nobles were also manufactured. Abul Fazl mentions eleven types of tents. Their size varied a great deal.

Embroidery on all types of textiles with cotton, silk or silver and gold thread was also an allied craft. Large number of craftsmen were involved in it.

### 22.2.2 Indigo

The demand for it in the country and for export was very high. As we read in Unit 21, the cultivation of indigo was widespread.

Except for the hilly regions, indigo was available in all parts of the country. The best variety was secured from Bayana, near Agra. The next best variety was from Sarkhej

near Ahmedabad. Being a basic dye (blue), it was in great demand in India as well as abroad.

In Gujarat, other centres where indigo dye could be had were Jambussar, Broach, Baroda, etc. In North India, Agra and Lahore were two other cities where indigo dye could be purchased in vast quantities. On the Coromandal coast, Masulipatam was another important mart for this dye.

The process of extracting was simple. The stalks of plants were put in water. After the dye was dissolved, the water was taken to another vat where the dye was allowed to settle at the bottom. It was strained and dried in the form of cakes. The process was done mostly in the villages by peasants.

### 22.2.3 Sugar, Oil, etc.

Since sugarcane was cultivated widely, sugar was also manufactured all over the country. Generally, we get references to three types of sugarcane products; the **gur** or jaggery; the powder sugar and the finer quality grains called candy. The jaggery was made in all sugarcane producing areas and was mainly consumed locally. The other two qualities were manufactured mainly in Bengal, Orissa, Ahmedabad, Lahore, Multan and parts of Northern India. Writing about Deccan in the 17th Century, Thevenot remarks that every peasant who grew sugarcane had his own furnace. Abul Fazl records the price of powder sugar around 128 **dams** for one **man**, while that of the candy 220 **dams**.

The method of extracting sugarcane juice involved the cane-press which was operated manually or with animal power. The jaggery or finer quality was obtained by boiling it over in pans or open furnace. It was during the process of boiling that different qualities were obtained. Bengal sugar was considered the best and was in great demand for export to Europe and Persia.

Extraction of oil was also mostly a village-based industry. The oilseeds were put to a simple oil-press operated manually or by animal power. The specialised caste involved in extracting the oil was called **tellis**. The residual product was used for animal feed.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) List some important places of cotton textile production.

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- 2) Write a small note on silk production in India.

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- 3) Which were the main indigo varieties produced in India?

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## 22.3 MINERALS, MINING AND METALS

Deep mining was not carried out in the 16th and 17th centuries in India, but surface mining for a large number of minerals and metal was practiced. We will deal with both in this section.

### 22.3.1 Mineral Production

The salt was the essential commodity in which India seems to have been self-sufficient. The sources of salt were the Sambhar lake in Rajputana, the Punjab rock-salt mines and sea-water. Sea salt was made mainly in Sind, the Rann of Cutch, other coasts of Gujarat, Malabar, Mysore and Bengal, etc. Since salt was not available in all parts of the country, it was one of the major articles of trade at regional and inter-regional level.

Saltpetre was one of the most important mineral products. It was in great demand by the Europeans. It was primarily used as an ingredient for gun powder. Initially, saltpetre was extracted at Ahmedabad, Baroda, etc. But since the supply could not meet the demand, it started to be made even in the Delhi-Agra region. However, by the second half of the seventeenth century, Patna in Bihar became an important centre for procuring saltpetre. Saltpetre, collected from the nearby places of Patna was then sent by boats down the Ganges to Hugli and sent to Europe.

The method of obtaining saltpetre from salt earth was a simple one. Shallow reservoirs were made on the ground and salt earth was mixed in water. The salt dissolved in water and earth settled down. This salt water was then boiled in large pans, the water evaporated and saltpetre was obtained. Indian artisans used earthen pans for boiling. The Europeans used iron or copper pans for boiling. Tavernier (17th century) found that Dutch were using boilers imported from Holland. According to one source, the total production in a year (1688) was around more than two lakhs mans of raw saltpetre from Bihar alone.

Other minerals such as alum and mica were produced on small scale.

### 22.3.2 Metals

India did not have gold and silver mines in the proper sense. The famous gold mines of Kolar were not explored. However, small quantities of gold were obtained from river beds, but the cost of procurement was more than its value. Fitch (1584) has described the method of washing the river sand and finding gold dust in Bihar. Similarly, gold was found in river beds in some other regions.

Most of the silver requirements were met through imports. Gold and silver were used for minting of coins. A large amount was used for making ornaments and for hoarding purposes as precious metal.

Rajasthan was the main centre for copper production where copper mines existed (at Khetri). The bulk of the copper was used for minting copper coins. Small and big household objects were also manufactured.

Iron was the most commonly found metal. Iron mines were widely distributed in the north, east, west, central and southern parts of the country. Abul Fazl records Bengal, Allahabad, Agra, Bihar, Gujarat, Delhi and Kashmir as iron producing regions. Chhotanagpur in Bihar and adjoining regions of Orissa also produced large quantities. The iron found in the south was converted into steel.

Iron was used for making ploughs, axes, nails, screws, swords, daggers. The steel made in the south, especially in Golconda, was used for the manufacture of Damascus swords, admired all over the world.

Some other metals, though in small amount, were also produced. Lead was found in north and western India.

#### Diamond Mining

Diamond mining was carried out in some parts of India, but the diamond miners of Golconda were most famous. Other places included Biragarh in Berar, Panna in Madhya Pradesh, Khokhra or Chhotanagpur in Bihar.

## 22.4 WOOD-BASED CRAFTS

Wood provided the basis for a large number of crafts. The means of surface transport made of wood included palanquins and bullock-drawn carts. Both were made in a wide variety of styles and the ones used by rich were carved and decorated. Large number of boats and sea-going ships were always needed since India has a long coast line and north India is criss-crossed by a large number of navigable rivers.

The boats were built in various sizes: from small one for pleasure trips to large ones for transporting hundreds of kilograms of goods over long distance.

The ports on the Arabian sea as well as the Bay of Bengal, such as Thattah Surat, Bassein, Goa, Cragnore, Cochin, Masulipatam and the neighbouring, Narasapur, Hariharpur, Satgaon and Chittagong were important ship-building centres. When the Europeans intensified their activities, they got their ships repaired at these places. They found Indian ships better suited for eastern waters and, hence, they purchased ships built in India. Thus ship-building industry received a considerable boost because of the rising European demand throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Other uses of wood were to make doors, windows, and a large number of household furniture such as boxes, bed stead etc. The rich had their furniture made from high quality wood.

### Check Your Progress 2

1) Write ten lines on Saltpetre production in India.

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2) Describe the main regions of:

i) Diamond mining

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ii) Ship-building

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## 22.5 MISCELLANEOUS CRAFTS

Each and every region had its highly specialised crafts. Here it would not be possible to go into the details of all these crafts. We will describe some important crafts only.

Stone-cutting was an important craft as stones were widely used in the construction of houses, palaces, forts, temples, etc. Indian stone-masons were known for their skill.



Other items of non-agricultural production were leather goods such as shoes, saddles, bookcovers, etc., manufactured all over the country.

### Paper

Paper was manufactured during the period under review in a number of centres, such as Ahmedabad, Daulatabad, Lahore, Sialkot, Biharsharif near Patna, etc. Ahmedabad paper was of several varieties and was exported to Arabia, Turkey and Persia. The paper from Kashmir was also famous

In a number of places in north India, paper was made which was used for local needs. The manufacture in South India was limited. Most of the paper was hand made and of a coarse variety.

### Pottery

The contemporary records refer to the use of earthenwares by people for cooking, storing water and grains, etc. Besides, most of the houses had earthen tiled (**khaprail**) roof. The demand for earthenware must have been great. Every large village in India had its potter and pottery for every day use was made all over the country.

Apart from the above coarse pottery, fine crockery was also made. Manucci (1663) mentions the manufacture of earthen crockery which was finer than glass and lighter than paper. Marshal (1670) also noticed fine crockery.

Glass manufacturing was also undertaken in several parts of the country.

Other miscellaneous items produced by Indian craftsmen included soap, objects of ivory and shell, articles of horn, etc.

Several crafts were forest-based. Among them, lac was used for the manufacture of bangles, varnishing doors and windows and toys and for preparing a red dye. It was extracted from forests in Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Malwa, Gujarat, Malabar, etc. Bengal lac was considered to be the best. In Surat, bangles and toys were made of lac. It was also used for sealings.

Various contemporary authorities refer to pearl fisheries being practiced in the sea waters along the southern coast.

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## 22.6 ORGANISATION OF PRODUCTION

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All forms of production from independent artisan level to the **karkhanas** existed in India during the period of our study. The organisation of production varied in different crafts and industries in accordance with the needs and requirements of that craft.

**Village Artisans:** As we noticed in Units 17, 18 and 19 the artisans in rural areas, who produced articles of daily use, formed a regular part of the village establishment called **jajmani** system. The most crucial services were those of the blacksmiths, carpenters, potters and shoemakers. Generally, they were paid in kind for providing the basic tools, agricultural implements and their maintenance needs. The system was much more organised in Deccan and Maharashtra where village artisans and servants were called **balutedars**. There was one more group of workers in Deccan called **alutedars** which were also included in some regions.

With the money economy penetrating into the rural areas and also the increasing demand, the situation in this subsistence-oriented system started changing. According to Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, "By the seventeenth century, if not much earlier, exchange had made significant inroads into the subsistence-oriented system of manufacture by collectively maintained artisans. Payments in cash and kind for additional work, or entirely on a piece-work basis, co-existed with the more widespread practice of allocating fixed shares of the rural produce and/or land to the artisan families".

Tapan Ray Chaudhuri adds that probably by the mid-eighteenth century the entire production for the long and medium distance trade was dependent on artisans who were fully weaned from the **jajmani** system.

With the increase in demand, it seems the rural artisan catered to urban markets also. The village artisan seems to be quite mobile and would move from one village to

## Production for the Market

Production for the market was mainly done at the independent artisan-level production. Almost every craft had specialised artisans manufacturing articles for sale. Pelsaert, a Dutch traveller (1623) mentions that around 100 specialized categories of artisans work in different crafts. The high level of specialization is most evident in the textile manufacture. Almost every operation was performed by a different group of workmen like carding, spinning of yarn, winding silk thread, weaving of cloth, bleaching, dyeing, printing and painting of cloth, etc. Peasants in villages played a significant role by taking up various manufacturing activities. In almost all the agro-based crafts like indigo, sugar and others like spinning of silk and cotton yarn, manufacture of salt and saltpetre, they were at the core of manufacturing activity.

The localization of manufacture was a significant feature. As referred to in the earlier sections, different regions specialised in the production of certain crafts. The European traders tell us that they had to go from place to place to procure the desired commodities. Masulipatam and Benaras each are said to have around 7000 weavers. Similarly, Qasimbazar had around 2500 silk weavers.

At the individual artisan-level production, the artisan himself procured the raw material and tools, performed the manufacture and also retailed the products. The working place was invariably the house of the craftsman or artisan. The artisans had little capital to work with. Therefore, the individual output was small and merchants had to make great efforts to procure it. The quality also differed.

### Dadni

These problems gave rise to a revised form of production called **dadni** or a sort of putting-out system. In **dadni** the money was advanced to artisans by the merchants and the artisans promised to deliver the goods at a given time. Here the merchant was in a position to dictate his specifications. The practice in textiles sector became so widespread that it was difficult to obtain cloth without making advance payment to the artisans. In the seventeenth century, the weaving industry in Deccan was found to be dominated by merchants. In South India, according to Alaev., "The subjection of crafts to merchant capital was widespread. Practically all the artisan settlements along the Coromandal coast were under the control of one trader or another. In the 17th century, the biggest of them (merchant) was Kasi Viranna, who had in his hands all the coasts from Madras to Armagaon except Pulicat. Weaver settlements of this region were known as 'the Viranna villages'." (*The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I, p. 320.*)

The system of **dadni** empowered the buyer to dictate the quality and quantity of the goods produced. The artisan got the much needed money to buy raw material with the guarantee of the sale of the goods made, but he lost his control over sale.

### Manufactories

In 1620-21, the English factory at Patna established probably the first such unit for winding silk yarn and employed around 100 workmen. The Dutch at Qasimbazar employed 700-800 weavers in their silk factory. But such instances are just sporadic (see A.J. Qaisar, 'The Role of Brokers in Medieval India').

Another specialised area where large number of workmen were assembled to work at one place were ship-building and building construction. Almost all the ship-building centres in Deccan and South India had large number of artisans working on each ship under one single supervision. Building activity also like ship-building required large number of artisans working under one single supervision. (See A.J. Qaisar, 'Ship-building in the Mughal Empire during the Seventeenth Century' and *Building Construction in Mughal India: The Evidence from Painting.*)

There were two other production sectors where large number of workmen (though not very skilled artisans) were employed. One, the diamond mines of Golconda and Deccan had around 30,000 to 60,000 people working at periodical season of mining. Here, the plots of land were taken on rent from the ruler by the prospectors. Each of them used to employ 200 to 300 miners to work on their plots. The miners were paid wages per day. Similarly, in Bihar around 8000 men used to come to diamond mines in the season of mining (December-January). These people were generally peasants and workers who came to work here after sowing their fields.

The second case of assemblage of large workers was in the production of saltpetre. In this case also large number of people worked under one master in small groups. In Bihar they were called **nooneas**. With the increasing demand, the Dutch and English established their own units for refining saltpetre. The workmen in their refineries were to work with the equipment provided by these European companies.

**Karkhanas**

A unique feature of production in the period of our study was the **karkhanas**. These **karkhanas** were in operation even in 14th-15th centuries. These **karkhanas** were part of the royal establishment and also of the nobles. These produced things for the consumption of the royal household and the court. Many high nobles also had their own **karkhanas**. Generally expensive and luxury items were produced here. Skilled artisans were employed to work under one roof to manufacture things needed. They were supervised by state officials. The need for such **karkhanas** arose because the artisans on their own were not in a position to invest huge amounts required for royal needs. Because of valuable raw material, the state also did not want to give these to artisans to work at their own places. We will not go here into details of the functioning of these **karkhanas** as their production was not for the market but for personal consumption of the king and nobles.

We notice that the process of production was undergoing a change during the period of our study. As summed up by Tapan Ray Chaudhari, “The organisation of manufacture in Mughal India did not remain unchanged. A lot was happening, but on a limited scale, and the sum total of new developments did not amount to a break with the past. Continuity was still the dominant characteristic. Yet the changes in organisation were more basic than those in technique”.

**Check Your Progress 3**

1) Briefly describe the **jajmani** system.

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2) Write five lines on each of the following.

i) **Dadni**

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ii) **Manufactories**

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iii) **Karkhanas**

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## 22.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we discussed the non-agricultural production of India which was sufficiently developed for being recognised separately. Here the largest and perhaps the most widespread production was that of textile goods. There was a great demand for cotton textiles which seemed to have given a great boost to the industry. The other agro-based industries were those pertaining to indigo and sugar.

The salt production was sufficient for meeting the needs of the domestic sector. Saltpetre was another important industry where the production was carried out on a large scale. As a result there existed enough surplus for export. Substantial quantities of iron and copper were also produced though production of silver on an equal scale was missing. The ship-building industry also developed considerably during this period.

Significantly the bulk of production in non-agricultural sector was undertaken through the agency of the individual artisan. In some sectors like, saltpetre and diamond mining, large number of artisans and workmen worked jointly under common supervision. A few experiments for establishing manufactories for silk winding were undertaken by the East India Company. But they met with little success. The system of advancing money to artisans for production purposes was well developed. Royal **karkhanas** produced luxury items catering to the needs of the royalty and the nobility.

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## 22.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Gujarat, Bengal and parts of U.P. were famous textile centres. See Sub-section 22.2.1.
- 2) Bengal produced large quantities of silk yarn which was woven in many other parts of the country. See Sub-section 22.2.1.
- 3) Two famous varieties were Bayana and Sarkhej indigo. See Sub-section 22.2.2.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) In 17th century large quantities were produced in Bihar, Bengal and Gujarat. See Sub-section 22.3.1.
- 2) See Sub-sections 22.3.1 and 22.3.2.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) In **jajmani** system the artisans were paid by the community for the service provided by them. See Section 22.5.
- 2) See Section 22.6.

# UNIT 23 INLAND AND FOREIGN TRADE

## Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Inland Trade
  - 23.2.1 Local and Regional Trade
  - 23.2.2 Inter-Regional Trade
  - 23.2.3 Coastal Trade
- 23.3 Foreign Trade
- 23.4 Trade Routes and Means of Transport
  - 23.4.1 Trade Routes
  - 23.4.2 Means of Transport
- 23.5 Administration and Trade
- 23.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 23.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 23.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we will discuss the inland and foreign trade of India during the Mughal period. After going through this unit you will be able to:

- know the pattern of local, regional and inter-regional trade;
- list the main commodities of inland trade;
- have an idea about the pattern of India's foreign trade, both over land and sea-borne; and
- list the commodities of import and export.

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## 23.1 INTRODUCTION

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In units 21 and 22 of this Block, we discussed the agricultural and non-agricultural production of India. In those units we discussed the commodity production in different regions of the empire. We also noticed that the volume of production was higher than the local consumption. Large amounts of this surplus production were used for trading purpose.

Trade in agricultural products started from the field itself. Similarly, commercial transactions of craft products also started from artisan's household. All this took place at various levels — local, regional, inter-regional and outside the country. In this unit, we will discuss the pattern of inland and foreign trade during the seventeenth century.

During this period, political stability and enhanced production gave a fillip to trading activities. The volume of trade increased manifold. Another significant feature was the entry of few prominent European countries in the trading arena of India. The Portuguese had already settled in the Western parts of India by early 16th century. In the 17th century, the French, Dutch and English also participated in large-scale trading activities.

In this unit, we will confine our discussion to two aspects:

- i) the pattern of inland and foreign trade, and
- ii) the main articles of export and import traffic.

With the increase in commercial activities, a number of specialised groups involved in trade also grew. At the same time, some basic commercial practices were also established. These aspects will be discussed in Unit 24. The organisation of European trading Companies will also be discussed in a separate unit (Unit 25).

Let us begin with the inland trade.

## 23.2 INLAND TRADE

As referred to above, we will discuss the inland trade at local, regional and inter-regional levels.

### 23.2.1 Local and Regional Trade

As discussed in unit 16, land revenue was realized in cash. This meant that the surplus agricultural produce was to be sold. Bulk of this was sold in the village itself. Most of this purchase was made by **banjaras**—the traditional grain merchants. They, in turn, carried it to other towns and markets. Tavernier, a French traveller who came to India in the second half of the 17th century, says that in almost every village could be bought rice, flour, butter, milk, vegetables, sugar and other sweets. In some villages even sheep, goat, fowl, etc. were available. According to him, every big village would have even a **sarraf** or money-changer. In addition, every locality had markets in the nearby towns where people from the surrounding areas would come to buy and sell things. Apart from these regular markets, there were **hat** and **penth** where people from the villages could exchange or buy things of their daily need. These **hats** or **penths** were periodic markets which were held on fixed days in a week. Sometimes there were **hats** for specific goods.

In these local markets, foodgrains, salt, simple tools and equipments of wood and iron for agriculture and domestic needs and coarse cotton textiles were available.

These markets existed in all small townships and bigger villages. Banarsi Das writing about Jaunpur around the middle of the 17th century noted that it had 52 **parganas**, 52 markets and 52 wholesale markets or **mandis**. This may suggest that almost every **pargana** had a market and a wholesale market.

It seems that a network of small and big markets viz., **hats**, **penths**, **mandis**, and the merchants in their individual capacities took care of the commercial activities in various localities. According to Tapan Raychaudhuri, individual village was probably part of a narrow circuit of exchange which encompassed the **mandis** mediating the distribution of commodities.

These local trading centres were linked to bigger commercial centres in a region. If we take Mughal provinces as regions, we notice that each of them had bigger commercial centres serving as nodal centres for all the commodities produced in various parts of the **suba**. Generally, these big towns also served as administrative headquarters of the **suba**. Patna, Ahmedabad, Surat, Dacca, Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Multan, Ajmer, Thatta, Burhampur, Masuliputnam, Bijapur, Hyderabad, Calicut, Kochin, etc. are a few examples of such trading centres. Our sources refer to these places as big commercial centres not only for the products of their respective regions, but also for serving as emporia for inter-regional and foreign trade. Each had a number of markets. Ahmedabad alone had as many as 19 **mandis** in and around it. If income accruing to a town from commercial taxes levied in its market is any index of the size of the market, we may note that the income of Ahmedabad in the second half of the 17th century from commercial taxes was estimated at around 42,86,000 **dams** per annum. Similarly cities like Delhi, Agra, Dacca & Lahore had separate markets for specific commodities. It is said that a noble's son in Delhi could spend one lakh of rupees in a day without making much ado. J. Linschoten writing about Goa around the end of the 16th century says auctions were held every day in the principle street of the city. He further adds that there is one street that is full of shops selling all kinds of silks, velvet, satin, works of porcelain from China, Linen and all sorts of cloth. These cities had large number of merchants, brokers and **sarrafs**. There were a large number of **saraïs** (rest-houses) in these cities for the convenience of merchants and travellers.

The products from nearby towns, suburbs and villages found their way to these centres. Patna, for example, had silk from Baikantpur, cotton clothes from Nandanpur and Salimpur; fruits vegetables, opium and sugar from different other parts of the **suba**.

There were some towns that specialised in the trading of specific commodities: for example, Burhampur (cotton **mandi**), Ahmedabad (cotton textiles), Cambay (gems market), Surat-Sarkhej (indigo), Agra for Bayana indigo, etc.

All these commercial centres had mints which struck silver, copper and at some places gold coins. You will read more about mints in Unit 20.

### 23.2.2 Inter-Regional Trade

During the period of our study, trade between different regions of India was quite developed. Considering the time consuming and expensive mode of transport, such largescale inter-regional trade was phenomenally high in volume. Goods produced at one place were carried to long distance of hundreds and in some cases thousands of miles for purposes of trade. The main commodities of largescale interregional trade were foodgrains and various sorts of textiles. Luxury items, metals and weapons also occupied a prominent place in the long distance trade. It would not be possible for us to list the details of this trade in various kinds of commodities. Here we will give only a brief idea about some important commodities.

In the east, Bengal had well developed trade relations with all parts of India. The important trading centres of Bengal were Hugli, Dacca, Murshidabad, Malda, Satgaon, Tanda, Hijili, Sripur, and Sonargaon. Of these Hugli was one of the most prominent centres of trade.

Here products from Bihar, Orissa and some parts of Bengal were brought. Bengal supplied foodgrains to all parts of the country. Rice and sugar from Patna also was brought to the market of Bengal. Textiles of all sorts from Bihar, Benaras and Jaunpur could be bought in Bengal. Textiles produced in Lakhawar, a small town near Patna, were bought by merchants coming from all parts of India and even abroad. The Bengal textiles were available at Patna and as far as Ahmedabad in Gujarat. The largescale silk manufacture in Gujarat and Bihar was completely dependent on the raw silk from Bengal. The silk cloth produced from this raw silk found its way to all parts of India and abroad. Saffron from Kashmir was freely available in the markets of Bengal and Bihar. Bengal procured certain varieties of cotton chintz from as far a place as Burhanpur. Bengal also had trade links with Agra, Benaras and various other towns in the north.

In the west, Ahmedabad and Surat, the biggest commercial centres of the period, attracted textiles from south, north and the eastern parts of India. Here they were bleached and dyed for onwards sale. The silk manufactured in Gujarat from the raw silk of Bengal was again taken to the markets in the north. Gujarat received all its supply of pepper and spices from Malabar coast. Textiles were taken from Gujarat to Multan and Lahore. Gujarat received lac from Bengal; the Sarkhej indigo, famous for its quality, was also taken from Gujarat to all parts of India. Large scale trade carried on between the towns of Gujarat, Konkan and Malabar.

In the north, Agra received large quantities of silk from Bengal. Carpets and textiles from the Awadh region were taken to Gujarat, Bengal, Patna, Lahore and Multan. The saffron, woodproducts, fruits and woollen shawls, etc. from Kashmir found their way to the markets of north, west and east India. Kashmir supplied ice to Lahore, Multan, Agra and Delhi. Paper from Shahzadpur (near Allahabad) was taken to all parts of India. The famous indigo from Bayana (near Agra) was taken to Lahore, Multan and southern parts. The famous marble from Rajasthan was taken to all parts of the country, especially to Agra and Delhi. Foodgrains from north were taken to Gujarat.

Most of the trade from south was along the coast. Large quantities of Bengal indigo were sold in Masulipatan. Pepper and spices of the Malabar coast were taken to Bijapur, Coromandel, the Konkan coast, and the Gujarat tobacco from Masulipatan was taken to Bengal. Diamonds from Golkunda mines were taken to all parts of India.

Minerals and metals which were produced at select places only were taken to all parts of Mughal India. Salt produced mainly in Rajasthan and Punjab was taken to all parts of north and south India. The coastal areas however produced it from sea water by evaporation. The main sources of iron were Gwalior in central India, Rajasthan, Punjab and Sindh. Good quality steel was made in Cutch in Gujarat, some places in Deccan and South India. The bulk of copper was produced in Rajasthan. Bihar, Sind, Rajasthan and parts of north India were important places to procure saltpetre.

### 23.2.3 Coastal Trade

Because of long distances and slow moving transport system interregional trade was also conducted through the sea route involving large number of coastal areas. This

coastal trade was most prominent on the western coast. The eastern coast also had substantial trading operations. The trading operations on the two coasts were organised in different ways. Piracy on the western coast was rampant. As a result most of the traffic here was conducted through convoys. While on the eastern coast small boats plied throughout the year.

On the western coast between May and September the merchant boats in convoys under protection plied two or three times between Goa and Cochin and Goa and Cambay. The Cambay convoy would have around 200-300 boats and ships of various sizes. They carried stuffs like wheat, oil, pulses, sugar, textiles and miscellaneous other items. The convoy between Cochin and Goa were not so large but carried a big range of commodities. Ships coming from Malacca and the east were usually joined somewhere off Ceylon by coasting boats from Bengal and the Coromandal coast, and the whole fleet was convoyed under protection to Cochin.

Boats ladden with copper, zinc, tin, tobacco, spices and chintz came from Coromandal coast to the coastal towns of Bengal. Coromandal coast in turn received copper, mercury, cinnanbar, pepper etc., from Gujarat, and spices from Malabar. The coastal towns of Orissa also had links with Coromandal and Malabar coasts. Cloth, foodstuffs, iron, steel and other metals brought from Vijaynagar and Golkunda reached Bengal via Coromandal. Rice, textiles and various other items from various towns from coast of Bengal reached to the western coast. The movement of coastal trade was most prominent between Sind-Cambay; Gujarat-Malabar; Bengal-Coromandal; and Malabar-Coromandal.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Describe the role played by hats and penths in the local trade.

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2) List ten places that worked as focal points for regional trade.

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3) Describe the inter-regional trade from other parts of country to Gujarat.

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**23.3 FOREIGN TRADE**

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For centuries India had maintained trading relations with other countries. The pattern of trade and commodities underwent changes over the period. During the 16th and 17th centuries also India had a flourishing trade with a large number of foreign countries. The significant aspect of foreign trade during this period is the coming of the Europeans. This increased India's foreign trade manifold. Most of this trade was in the form of exports of Indian goods. The imports were very small. In this section, we will take account of this foreign trade. We shall discuss it under the heads of exports and imports.



## 1) Exports

Textiles, saltpetre and indigo formed the major share of Indian exports. Other important items were sugar, opium spices and other sundry commodities.

### Textiles

As we noticed in Unit-21 textile production in India had reached new heights during this period. The increasing exports contributed to the increase in production.

Before the coming of the Europeans, the main purchasers of Indian cotton textiles were the Mughals, Khorasanis, Iraqis and Armenians who carried them to Central Asia, Persia and Turkey. These goods purchased from all parts of India were taken by land route via Lahore. It is difficult to have an idea about the total volume of this trade. The Dutch and English concentrated on Indian textiles from the 17th century onwards. The main varieties of cotton fabrics were **baftas**, **Samanis**, Calico, **Khairabadi** and **Dariabadi**, **Amberty** and **Qaimkhani** and muslin and other cotton cloths. Later on, various varieties of cotton textiles from Eastern coast were also procured. Chintz or printed cotton textiles were the most favourite items of export. Carpets from Gujarat, Jaunpur and Bengal were also bought.

Silk cloth from Gujarat and Bengal also occupied a prominent place. Beside woven cloth, there was a demand for cotton and silk yarn also. Moreland estimates that the demand of the English Company alone was 200,000 pieces in 1625; 1,50,000 pieces in 1628 and around 1,20,000 pieces in 1630. The famines of Gujarat in the 1630s affected the supply, but during 1638-41 the shipment from Surat carried more than 50,000 pieces per year. After 1650, the east coast was also explored and the supply from Madras was around a **lakh** pieces or more per year. The Dutch demand was also more than 50,000 pieces a year. An account of 1661 estimates that the Armenians bought cotton textiles worth 10 lakh rupees to be sent to Persia.

The above figures give only rough estimates for the exports; nevertheless, they provide an idea about the largescale textile exports.

### Saltpetre

Saltpetre, one of the important ingredients for making gunpowder was much in demand in Europe. There are no references to its export in the 16th century. In the 17th century, the Dutch started exporting it from Coromandal. Soon the English also followed. During the first half of 17th century, the Dutch and the English were exporting moderate quantities from Coromandal, Gujarat and Agra. In the second half of the 17th century, its trade from Bihar via Orissa and Bengal ports started. Soon Bihar became the most important supplier.

After 1658, the English were procuring more than 25,000 **maunds** of saltpetre per year from Bengal ports. The quantity increased after 1680. The Dutch demand was much higher (almost four times). The English demand for this commodity continued during the 18th century.

### Indigo

Indigo for blue dye was produced in most of northern India — Punjab, Sind and Gujarat. The indigo from Sarkhej (Gujarat) and Bayana (near Agra) was much in demand for exports. Prior to its supply to Europe, large quantities of this commodity were exported to the Persian Gulf from Gujarat, and to Aleppo markets from Lahore.

The Portuguese started its export around the last quarter of the 16th century. Europe's demand was very large for dyeing woollen cloths. The Dutch and English started exporting it in the 17th century. Besides, merchants from Persia purchased it for Asiatic markets and Eastern Europe. The Armenians were also buying substantial quantities. In the 17th century, the Dutch, English, Persians, Mughals, and Armenians competed to procure the commodity. Around the middle of the 17th century, the Dutch and English were procuring around 25,000 or 30,000 **maunds** per annum. The demand continued to increase during the following years.

### Other Commodities

Apart from the commodities listed above, a large number of other commodities were exported from India. Opium was bought by the French, the Dutch and the English Companies. The main sources of supply were Bihar and Malwa. The Bengal sugar

was also taken in bulk by the Dutch and English Companies. Ginger was exported to Europe by the Dutch. Turmeric, ginger and aniseed (*saunf*) were exported by the Armenians. Large scale trading operations were conducted between the ports of Gujarat and Indonesian archipelago. From here cotton textiles were taken in bulk to Indonesia and spices were brought in return. Brightly coloured cotton cloth and chintz from India were in great demand. A large part of this trade was later on taken by Coromandal from where textiles were exported to Indonesian islands and spices were imported from there.

**Imports**

As compared to exports from India, the imports were limited to only a few select commodities. Silver was the main item of import as it was brought to finance the purchases of European Companies and other merchants from different parts of Europe and Asia. Copper, too, was imported in some quantity. Lead and mercury were other important commodities brought to India. Silk and porcelain from China were imported into India by the English. Good quality wine, carpets and perfumes were brought from Persia. Some items like cut glass, watches, silver utensils, woollen cloths and small weapons from Europe were in demand by the aristocracy in India. Horses from Central Asia were imported in large number for military uses. The state was the main purchaser. Besides, India had trade relations with its immediate neighbours in the hill kingdoms. Musk was brought from Nepal and Bhutan to India where it was bought by the Europeans. Borax was also imported from Tibet and Nepal. Iron and foodgrains were supplied in return to these hill regions.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) List the main commodities of export to European markets.

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- 2) Write a brief note on indigo export from India.

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- 3) List the main items of import in India.

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**23.4 TRADE ROUTES AND MEANS OF TRANSPORT**

To meet the demands of the large volume of interregional and foreign trade, there was a need for a network of routes and a developed transport system. In this section we will take note of these two aspects which were crucial to the commercial activities.

**23.4.1 Trade Routes**

In this sub-section we will discuss inland and overseas trade routes.

## **Inland Trade Routes**

It is to the credit of Mughal Emperors that we find an elaborate network of trade routes linking all the commercial centres of the Empire by the beginning of the 17th century.

Generally, the roads were looked after by the state or chieftains through whose territory they passed. In certain regions, these roads were obstructed by a large number of rivers which were crossed by fords or sometimes bridges had to be built. The fords and bridges were also built and maintained by state or nobles. However, the condition of these roads during the rains was a bad commentary since long stretches became unusable during the monsoons. We have records from travellers lamenting the bad muddy condition of Surat-Burhanpur route during the rains. To mark the alignment of roads as also to indicate the distance travelled, the state provided towers known as **kosminars**. However, our sources tell us that only those routes which were traversed more frequently had **kosminars**.

All the prominent routes had **sarais** at short intervals. These **sarais** were used by the merchants and travellers as halting places. Apart from residential quarters, big **sarais** also provided to the itinerant traveller space for storage of goods.

To give you an idea of some important trade routes we have listed them below:

### **Agra-Delhi — Kabul Route**

Agra-Faridabad-Delhi-Sonepat-Panipat-Karnal-Ambala-Ludhiana-Fatehpur-Lahore-Rohtasfort-Rawalpindi-Shamsabad-Peshawar-Fatehabad-Kabul.

### **Agra-Burhanpur—Surat Route**

Agra-Dholpur-Gwalior-Narwar-Sironj-Handiya-Burhanpur-Talner-Nandurbar-Kirka-Surat.

### **Surat-Ahmedabad-Agra**

Surat-Broach-Baroda-Ahmedabad-Palampur-Jalore-Merta-Ludana-Hinduan-Fatehpur Sikri-Agra.

### **Agra-Patna-Bengal Route**

Agra-Firozabad-Etawa-Sarai Shahzada-Allahabad-Banaras-Sahasram-Daud Nagar-Patna-Munger-Bhagalpur-Rajmahal-Dampur-Dacca.

The river route from Agra to Bengal ran almost parallel to the land route.

## **Routes for Foreign Trade**

Foreign and Indian merchants traded through, both, the overland and overseas routes.

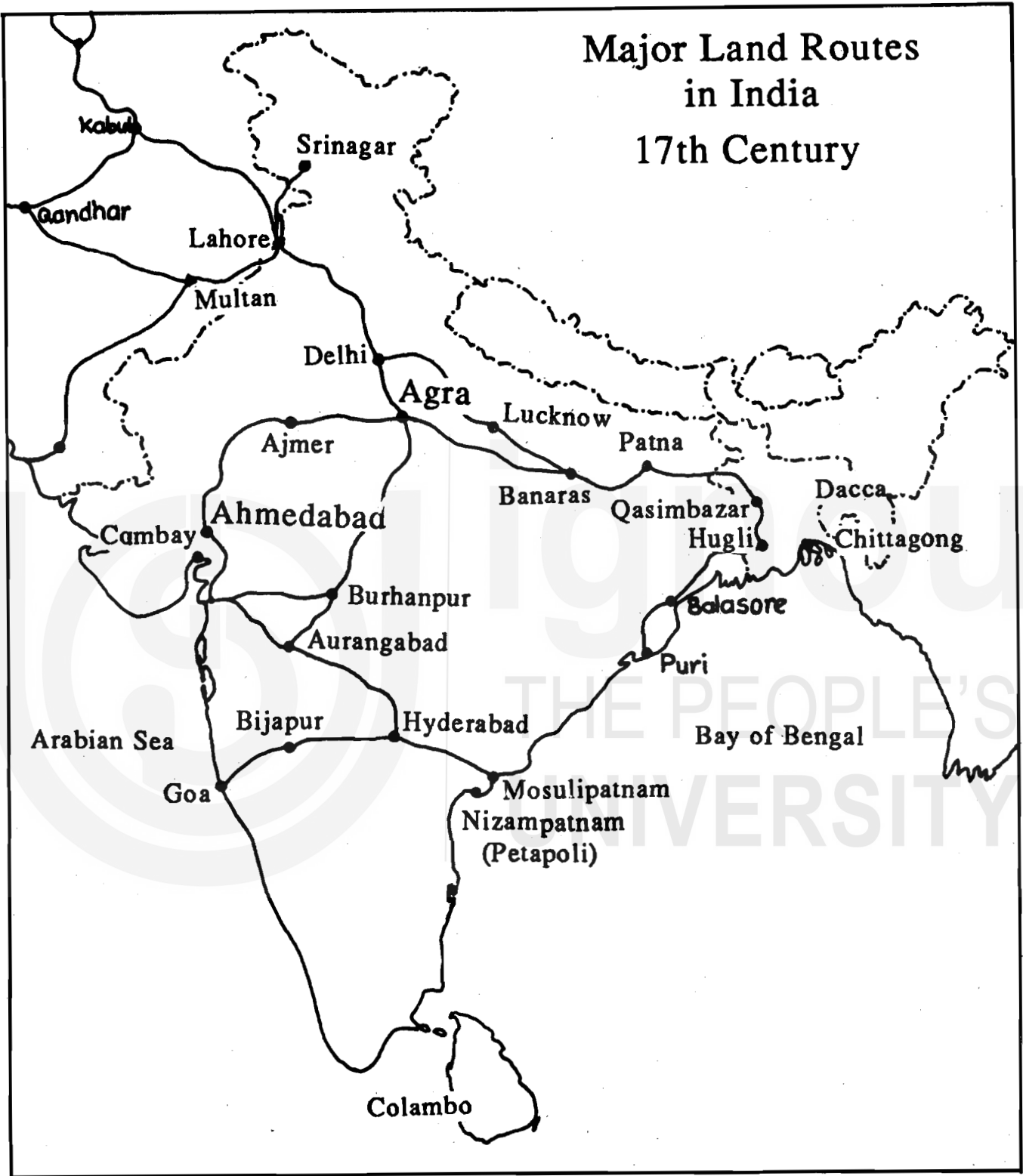
### **i) Overland Route**

The most frequented overland route during the medieval period was the one connected with the 'great silk route'. The 'great silk route' beginning from Beijing passed through Central Asia via Kashghar, Samarqand and Balkh and Kabul. Indian hinterlands were connected with this great route at Lahore. It passed through Multan, Qandahar (and then entered Persia via Yezd, and Isfahan), Baghdad, and after crossing the Euphrates it reached Aleppo. From there, the commodities were taken to Europe aboard ships.

### **ii) Overseas Route**

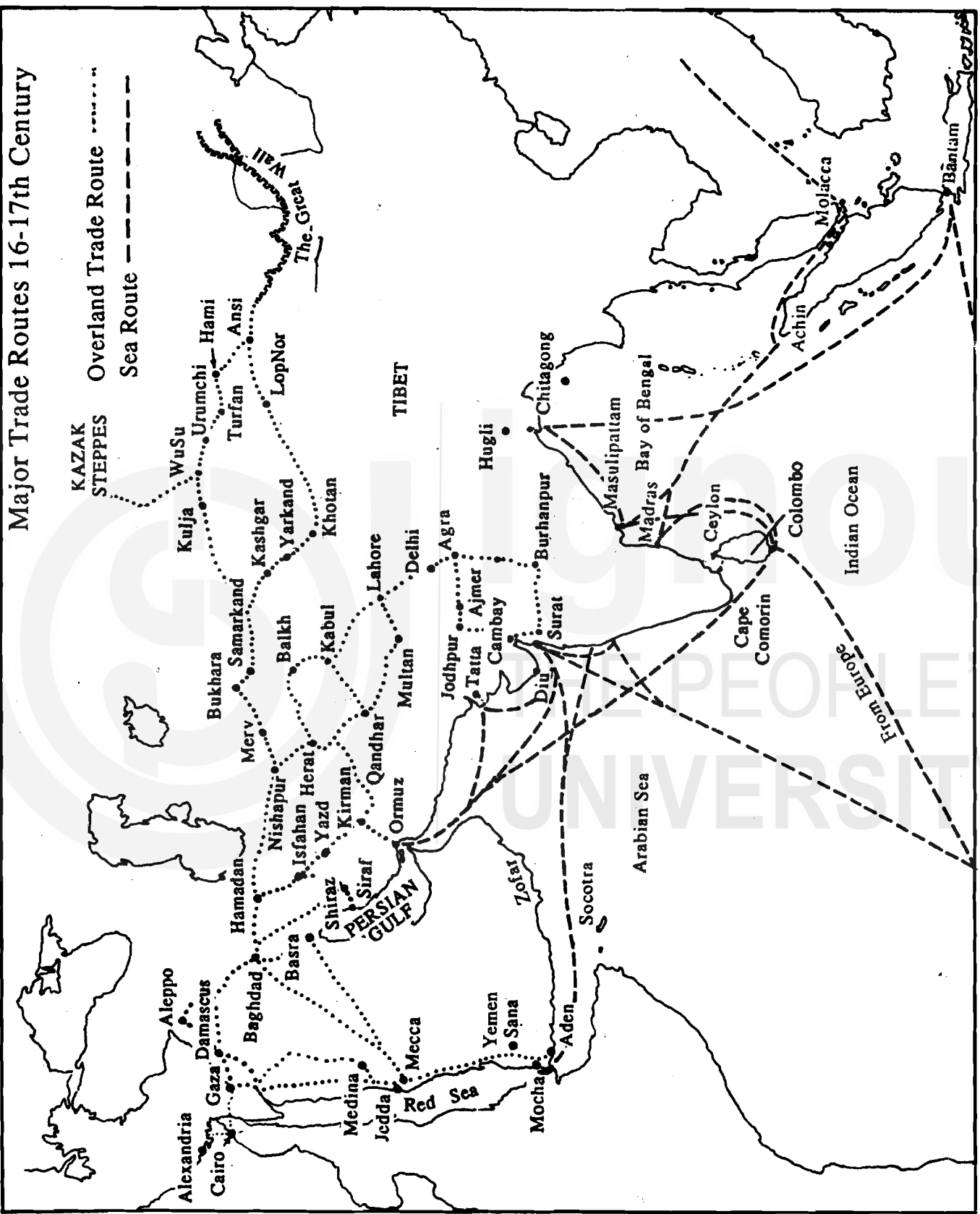
The sea routes on both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal were well frequented. Before the discovery of the sea route via the Cape of Good Hope, the most frequented sea routes in the north were;

- a) from Cambay, Surat, Thatta to the Persian Gulf and Red Sea;
- b) from other parts like Dabhor, Cochin and Calicut to Aden and Mocha. At Mocha certain commodities were carried via Red sea and then through overland route to Alexandria via Cairo. Alexandria was another point of distribution of commodities into European countries. With the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope, the European countries got new openings. Now they no more depended on Alexandria or Aleppo. Instead, they dealt directly with India and South Asian countries.



# Major Trade Routes 16-17th Century

Overland Trade Route .....  
Sea Route - - - - -



As for Eastern seas, since long the Indian merchants were having seaborne trade with China and the Indonesia Archipelago. From Hugli, Masulipatnam and Pulicat, commodities were sent directly to Achin, Batavia and Malacca. Through the Malacca straits, merchants used to go as far as Macao and Canton in China.

### 23.4.2 Means of Transport

We will confine our discussion to the means of transport in use for commercial purposes only.

#### Land Transport

Oxen played a major role. They were used as pack animals for carrying load on their backs. We get references to grain merchants travelling with 10000-20000 pack animals in one caravan called **tanda**. Apart from the **banjaras**, other merchants also used them for transporting goods. Oxen-drawn carts were also used to transport goods. An ox could carry four **maunds** and a cart 40 **maunds**. The oxen which drew carts could travel 20 or 30 days without break, covering on an average 20-25 miles per day. Camels were commonly used in the western part of the country for carrying goods. They carried goods by land to Persia and Central Asia.

On high mountain regions, mules and hill ponies were used to carry heavy loads. Here human labour was also employed.

#### River transport

Large number of rivers provided a network of river routes. The most frequent use of boats was in Bengal and Sindh. There was regular traffic of goods between Agra and Bengal through boats. The boats carrying goods from Agra via Yamuna joined Ganga at Allahabad and went to Bengal. Contemporary sources refer to the plying of hundreds of boats between Agra and Bengal. Manrique noticed around 2000 boats in anchor at Rajmahal. Our sources refer to around forty thousand boats in Sindh.

Each 'patella' (a kind of flat boat) plying between Patna and Hugli had a carrying capacity of around 130 to 200 tons of load. The other goods carrying boats had a capacity of 1000 to 2000 maunds each.

While moving in the direction of the flow of the river, it was much faster. Generally it took less than half the time than by road. At the same time, river transport was cheaper also. For example: from Multan to Thatta the goods by river would cost Rs. 3/4 per maund, while for a shorter distance by land it would cost around Rs. 2 per maund.

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## 23.5 ADMINISTRATION AND TRADE

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The Mughal Emperors took keen interest in the trading activities. Their policy was to encourage trade and offer concessions to merchants from time to time.

#### Customs and Road Tax

In Unit 20 we have already discussed the customs and road taxes charged from merchants. We would like you to note that the policy regarding these taxes changed periodically. For example Jahangir abolished customs on the trade with Kabul and Qandahar. During the famine of Gujarat, tax on a number of commodities were remitted. Aurangzeb at his accession in 1659, abolished tolls and taxes on food stuffs.

We come across a number of royal orders and decrees abolishing taxes and customs on certain items. Almost all the European companies—the British, Dutch and French—procured royal orders for carrying merchandise without paying transit dues. Aurangzeb at one stage abolished all road tolls. According to the decrees of the Emperors, the state policy towards trade appears to be liberal but in actual practice the : : n was different.

#### Attitude of the Administration

The provincial governors, subordinate officers of the markets and customs officers were most of the time reluctant to enforce liberal policies. They were always looking for ways to fleece the merchants. The dues collected were often appropriated by

officials themselves. The problem was further aggravated when the officials themselves indulged in trade. Nobles and high officials frequently tried to establish monopolies on certain articles of trade.

Prince Shuja, the son of Shah Jahan had wide ranging trade interests. Mir Jumla, a high noble, tried to establish his monopoly in Bengal. The English first tried to resist it but finally surrendered agreeing to procure all saltpetre supply through him. Shaista Khan, another prominent noble, also forced the English to sell all their goods and silver to him in return of which they were assured free supply of saltpetre. Shaista Khan's daily income was estimated around Rs. two lakh. His son, Buzurg Umed Khan, also had extensive overseas trade.

Apart from these high placed nobles, subordinate officers also indulged in trade. Legally, the officers and nobles were not debarred from undertaking business activities. The problem was that competition was replaced by coercion and exploitation by those in power.

We come across a number of petitions and requests by foreign Companies, merchants and individuals complaining against official high-handedness. There are innumerable royal orders and decrees granting relief. Because of the poor means of communication and long distances the relief was delayed or at times not implemented at all. The struggle continued throughout the period. In spite of these hurdles, trade kept growing, attracting merchants from many countries.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) List the main towns on Agra-Ahmedabad and Agra-Dacca route.

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- 2) Describe the sea-route from Indian ports to Europe.

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- 3) Why the imperial policy regarding commerce was not fully implemented?

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**23.6 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit we discussed inland and foreign trading activities during the period under review. At the local and regional level the commercial or trading transactions were confined to foodgrains, coarse cloth, salt, equipments of daily use and some other commodities. It was mainly conducted through **hats** or **penths** — the periodic markets. Small town markets also played a role. We notice that in such trading the flow of commodities was mainly from the village to towns. Different regions of India had developed trade links. Commodities from one region to another were carried through a network of land and river routes. The coastal regions carried on this trade via searoute. This coastal trade was more prominent on the west coast

The foreign trade balance was favourable to India. Large scale export of Indian goods was carried to various parts of Asia and Europe. The main articles of export were textiles, indigo, saltpetre, sugar, etc. The coming of English and Dutch gave an impetus to foreign trade especially indigo and saltpetre. Imports to India were limited. The main articles of import were silver, woollen cloth and various luxury items.

The Mughal administration levied certain taxes and customs on the items of trade. The Mughal rulers provided some exemptions in duties to European companies. Trading ventures of the Mughal nobles and high ranking officials at times created problems for merchants and European companies.

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## 23.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Hats and penths played an important role in the distribution of various commodities at the local level. For details of commodities so exchanged see Sub-section 23.2.1
- 2) You may list places like Patna, Ahmedabad, Dacca, Surat, Agra, Lahore etc. See Sub-section 23.2.1.
- 3) Ahmedabad and Surat in Gujarat were the biggest commercial centres attracting commodities from, all parts of the country. For details see Sub-section 23.2.2.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Textiles both silk & cotton, saltpetre, indigo, sugar, etc. See section 23.3.
- 2) Indigo was exported to Europe and Asia. Two main varieties in demand were Sarkhej and Bayana indigo. For details see Section 23.3.
- 3) Silver, glassware, small arms and woollen cloth were main items of import. See Section 23.3.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Inland Trade-Routes in Section 23.4 and answer.
- 2) See Routes for Foreign Trade in Section 23.4
- 3) The imperial policies could not be implemented because of corruption and commercial interests of officials and nobles. See Section 24.5.



# UNIT 24 PERSONNEL OF TRADE AND COMMERCIAL PRACTICES

## Structure

- 24.0 Objectives
- 24.1 Introduction
- 24.2 Personnel of Trade
  - 24.2.1 Merchants
  - 24.2.2 Moneylenders and Sarrafs
  - 24.2.3 Brokers
- 24.3 Commercial Practices
  - 24.3.1 Bills of Exchange (Hundi)
  - 24.3.2 Banking
  - 24.3.3 Usury and Rate of Interest
  - 24.3.4 Partnership
  - 24.3.5 Insurance (Inland and Marine)
- 24.4 Merchants, Trading Organisations and The State
- 24.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 24.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

## 24.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, you will learn about the mercantile groups involved in trade and commercial practices of the period. After going through this Unit, you would

- know about the major merchant groups involved in trading activities;
- be able to understand the role of brokers, sarrafs and moneylenders in commerce, and
- know about the bills of exchange, commercial lending, rate of interest and partnership in business.

## 24.1 INTRODUCTION

You have already read about the inland and foreign trade during the period of our study. A broad spectrum of merchants peddling at the local level to the big traders involved in overseas commerce were to be found in all parts of the country. In the whole commercial process, certain specialised groups of merchants, brokers and sarrafs played their role at various levels.

Large scale trading operation strengthened some of the existing practices and institutions and gave rise to new ones. Systems of banking, bills of exchange and lending of money were important ones. Trading partnership and insurance were also in vogue.

## 24.2 PERSONNEL OF TRADE

In this section, we will discuss the merchants, sarrafs, moneylenders and brokers operating in Indian markets. Increasing commercial activities attracted a large number of people to these professions. However, the above trading groups were not necessarily divided into watertight compartments. At times the same person did two or more tasks at the same time. Here we will study them in separate groups according to the roles performed by them in trade and commerce of the period.

### 24.2.1 Merchants

Theoretically, **vaisyas** were supposed to indulge in commercial activities, but in actual practice people from a wide range of background could and did participate in it. During the period of our study we notice that certain groups and castes dominated in particular regions.

## Banjaras

In our sources we get innumerable references to the **banjaras** as a trading group who carried on trade between villages and between villages and towns in a region and even at inter-regional level. They were an important link for rural-urban trade. The **Banjaras** confined their trading activities to some limited commodities like grain, pulses, sugar, salt, etc. They procured a number of animals (mainly oxen to carry the load) and moved from place to place buying and selling goods. Jahangir in his **Tuzuk-i Jahangiri** records: "In this country the **Banjaras** are a fixed class of people, who possess a thousand oxen, or more or less, varying in numbers. They bring grain from the villages to the towns, and also accompany armies". The **Banjaras** generally moved with their families and household in groups. These groups moving together were called a **Tanda**. Each **Tanda** had its chief called **Nayaka**. At times a **Tanda** could have upto 600-700 persons (including women and children), each family having their oxen.

The **Banjaras** were both Hindus and Muslims. Some scholars divide them into four groups on the basis of commodities they traded in: grain, pulses, sugar, salt, and wood and timber.

The **Banjaras** operated in many parts of North India, but there were other similar traders known by different names. The **Nahmardis** was one such group of traders operating in Sindh. Another such nomadic traders were the **Bhotiyas** operating between the Himalayas and plains.

## Merchants in Different Regions

An important **vaisya** subcaste, that is, the **Baniyas** were the leading merchants in North India and Deccan. They belonged to 'he Hindu and Jain (mainly in Gujarat and Rajasthan) communities. Their counterparts were the **Khatris** in Punjab and **Kornatis** in Golkunda.

The word **Baniya** is derived from a Sanskrit word **vanik** meaning merchant. Many of the **Baniyas** carried surnames pointing to the place of their origin. The **Agarwals** came from **Agroha** (in present Haryana) and the **Oswals** from **Osi** in **Marwar**. **Marwar** gave probably the highest number of traders who are generally referred to as **Marwaris**. They were to be found in all parts of India and were the most eminent merchant group during the period of our study. There was a close caste bond between these merchants. They had their councils (**mahajan**).

Contemporary European travellers (**Linschoten**, 1583-89; **Tavernier**, 1656-67) marvelled at the skills of the **Baniyas** as merchants and had all praise for their accounting and book-keeping. The **Baniyas** unlike **Banjaras** were involved in all sorts of trading activities. At the village level, they traded in grain and other agricultural produce. They also acted as moneylenders, giving loans to peasants and other people including state officials and nobles. In towns they dealt in grain, textiles, gold, silver, jewels, spices and sundry other commodities. Some of them possessed assets of millions of rupees. They owned ships also. The community as a whole was known for simplicity and frugality.

In the region of Punjab, the **Khatris** were a major trading community. **Guru Nanak**, the founder of Sikh religion, was also a **Khatri**. Many of them were converted to Islam. This community had in its fold Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.

The **Multanis** were an important trading community of Delhi, parts of Punjab and Sindh in the 13-17th centuries. We get occasional references to them in the period of our study also.

The **Bohras** were important merchants of Gujarat. They were mostly Muslims. They were an urban community mainly based in Gujarat and other western parts. Apart from Gujarat, they had some settlements in **Ujjain** and **Burhanpur**. The **Bohra** merchants like **Mulla Muhammad Ali** and **Ahmed Ali** had assets of millions of rupees. Among Muslims, other merchant communities operating on the western coast were **Khatris** and **Kutchi Memons** of Gujarat.

## South India

In the southern part of the sub-continent, various merchant groups played prominent roles. The **Chetti** was one such group. This term is derived from Sanskrit **Shreshthi** (**Seth**). Perhaps the **Chetti** were very wealthy merchants. The merchants along the

Coromandal coast up to Orissa were known as Kling. The **Komatis** were the merchants belonging to a trading caste. They mainly worked as brokers for textiles and were suppliers of various products from hinterland to the port towns on southern coast. They were mainly Telugu speaking.

Like the **Chetties** another merchant group called **Chullas** were also divided into four sub-groups. Of these, the **Marakkayar** were the wealthiest merchants dealing in the coastal and South East Asian trade. This was a very mobile group and many had settled in Ceylon, the Maldives, Malacca, Johore, Javanese coast, Siam and Burma. In India, they were most active in South Coromandal, Madura, Cuddalore, Porto Nova, Nagole, Nagapatnam, Koyalpatnam etc. They mainly dealt in textiles, arecanuts, spices, grain, dried fish, salt, pearls and precious metals.

**Chrutian Paravas** were active in trade from Coromandal to Malabar and Ceylon. They specialised in coastal trading and brokerage.

Among the Muslims, the Golkunda Muslims were involved in overseas shipping. They were prominent in south of Madras and were the main merchants in Bay of Bengal region. The Mopilla Muslims of Indo-Arab origin were also important merchants in the region.

Some Gujarati merchants had also established themselves in the Madras region.

### Foreign Merchants

We get a large number of references to the presence of foreign merchants in almost all commercial centres of the period. Of these, the trading activities of Europeans has already been discussed in Unit 23. Among other foreign merchants, the Armenians were the most prominent. They dealt in all sorts of commodities from textiles to tobacco. They were settled in Bengal, Bihar and Gujarat. The Khorasanis, Arabs and Iraqis also frequented Indian markets.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Describe the role of Banjaras in inland trade.

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- 2) Name four merchant groups operating in different parts of India.

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### 24.2.2 Moneylenders and Sarrafs

In large parts of Northern India, the traditional merchants played a dual role as traders as well as moneylenders. In villages we hear of traditioinal **Bantya** lending money to individual peasants to pay land revenue. In towns and bigger places also merchants acted as moneylenders.

Another category among the personnel of trade which played a significant role was that of the **sarrafs**. They performed three distinct functions: (i) as money-changers; (ii) as bankers, and (iii) as traders of gold, silver and jewellery. The first two functions need some elaboration.

As money-changers, they were considered as experts in judging the metallic purity of coins as well as their weight. They also determined their current exchange rate. According to Tavernier, "In India, a village must be very small indeed if it has not a money changer called "Cherab" [Sarraf], who acts as banker to make remittances of money and issue letters of exchange".

As we discussed in Unit 20, the **sarraaf** was also a part of Mughal mint establishment. Every mint had a **sarraaf** who would fix the purity of bullion. He also verified the purity of coins after minting.

As bankers, they would receive deposits and give loans on interest. They used to issue bills of exchange or **hundis** (we will discuss it in detail later in the Unit) and honour the ones issued by others.

### 24.2.3 Brokers

**Dallals** or brokers as specialised mercantile professional trading group seem to have been active in the wake of the Turkish conquest of North India. They worked as middlemen in various commercial activities and transactions. With increasing inter-regional and foreign trade they became crucial. Merchants from foreign lands and distant regions heavily dependent on them. According to A. Jan Qaisar, the foreign merchants, who were unacquainted with the centres of production, pattern of marketing and language had to depend on the native brokers for their trading transactions. The need for brokers in India was mainly due to (i) centres of production for the same commodities were scattered all over the country; (ii) individual output of these centres was small (some centres specialised in particular commodities only), and (iii) large number of buyers competing for the same commodities in the same markets. We get innumerable references to the transactions done through broker. The English East India Company records refer to brokers being employed at their different factories. Fryer (late 17th Century) says that "without brokers neither the natives nor the foreigners did any business". Ovington (1690) also commented that "For buying and selling company's goods brokers are appointed who are of the **bania** caste and are skilled in the rates and value of all the commodities".

We hear from Manrique (1640) that there were around 600 brokers and middlemen at Patna. Their number might have been much larger in bigger commercial centres like, Surat, Ahmedabad, Agra and other coastal towns.

Indian brokers were to be found in foreign ports also. They were operating at Gombroon (Bandar Abbas), Basra, Bandar Rig, etc. Sometimes, the whole family worked as brokers in partnership. Bhimji Parak, a prominent broker, had a joint business with his brothers. He had 8 shares, Kalyandas 5, Kesso and Vithaldas 4 each.

A. Jan Qaisar divides brokers into 4 categories: (i) those employed by companies or merchants, (ii) those who worked for several clients, (iii) those who worked on an adhoc basis as broker-contractors, and (iv) state appointed brokers at commercial centres to register sale and purchase of article.

The brokers operating independently can be divided in various groups on the basis of their areas of partnerships. Some dealt only in one specific commodity like silk, saltpetre, cotton, textile, indigo, etc. Others dealt in more than one commodity. Some worked as sub-brokers or under brokers for a well-established broker.

Brokers' fees or commission was not strictly fixed. It depended on the commodity and the efforts of the broker to strike the deal or the labour involved in procuring the commodity. In ordinary dealings, the brokerage was two per cent of the value of transaction. One per cent was charged from each of the parties (buyers and sellers).

Brokers who were in regular employment were paid fixed salaries and also some commission in some deals. We do not have much information on their total emoluments. However, a few references in English Company records show the salaries of their brokers between Rs. 10 and 38 per month.

Besides helping their clients in procuring and selling goods, the brokers played a key role in the organisation of production. Most of the money advanced (**dadni**) to the artisans were made through brokers.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1) What different roles were performed by sarraafs?

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 2) Who were brokers? List different categories of brokers.

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## 24.3 COMMERCIAL PRACTICES

In this section, we will discuss various commercial practices employed in trade and commerce of the period.

### 24.3.1 Bills of Exchange (Hundi)

During this period **hundis** or bills of exchange became an important form of money transaction. **Hundi** was a paper document promising payment of money after a period of time at a certain place. To begin with, the practice started because of the problems involved in carrying large amounts of cash for commercial transactions. The merchants interested in carrying cash to a particular place would deposit it with a **sarraf** who would issue a **hundi** to the merchant. The merchant was to present it to the agent of the **sarraf** at his destination and encash it. This started as a safe and convenient method of transferring money. In due course, **hundi** itself became an instrument of transaction. It could be presented against a transaction. It could also be freely bought or sold in the market after endorsement.

According to Irfan Habib “the negotiability of **hundi** led to a situation in which large number of **hundis** were simply drawn and honoured against other **hundis** without the intermediation of actual cash payments”. In this process, it became a medium of payment.

The use of **hundi** was so widespread that even the imperial treasury and state were using it. In 1599, the state treasury sent Rs. 3,00,000 to the army in Deccan through a **hundi**. Tributes paid by Golkunda (Rs. 10,00,000) and Ghakkar Chief (Rs. 50,000) to the Mughal Emperor were also transferred through **hundis**.

We get quite a few references where provincial officials were instructed to transfer the revenue through **hundis**. Even the senior nobles would take the help of the **sarrafs** to transfer their personal wealth. Muqarrab Khan, the governor of Bihar, when transferred to Agra, gave Rs. 3,00,000 to the **sarraf** at Patna to be delivered at Agra.

Many big merchants also issued **hundi**. Such merchants and **sarrafs** had their agents at important commercial centres. At times, members of one family (father, son, brother, nephew) worked as agents for each other. Big firms had their agents even outside the country.

A commission was charged by the **sarrafs** on each **hundi**. The rate of exchange depended on the rate of interest prevalent and the period for which it was drawn. The period was calculated from the date of issue to its presentation for redemption. The rate fluctuated as it also depended on the availability of money at the time of issue and maturity. If money supply was good, the rate would drop. In case of scarcity, the rates rise. According to Irfan Habib, “a sudden spurt of payment in any direction might create pressure upon the **sarrafs** for cash at one place, while leaving more in their hands at another, a situation that they could rectify by discouraging remittances from the former to the latter and encouraging reverse remittance by modifying the exchange rate”.

To give you a rough idea a few rates are provided. In normal times 1½ per cent was charged for **hundis** from Patna to Agra and 7-8 per cent from Patna to Surat. For the **hundi** drawn at Ahmedabad for Burhanpur 7¼ per cent was charged in 1622.

### 24.3.2 Banking

The **sarrafs**, apart from issuing bills of exchange, also received money for safe deposit. This was returned to depositor on demand. The depositor was paid some interest on his deposits. The rate of interest payable to depositors kept changing. The rates available for Agra, for 1645 and Surat for 1630 works out around nine and half per cent per annum. The bankers in turn would give money on loan to the needy on a higher rate of interest. We get a number of references where state officers gave money from treasury to these bankers and kept the interest with them. Tapan Roy Chaudhuri writing about the Jagat Seth of Bengal says that "their rise to financial eminence was partly due to the access they had to the Bengal treasury as a source of credit".

Sujan Rai (1694) says that the **sarrafs** who accepted deposits were honest in dealings. Even strangers could deposit thousands for safe keeping and demand it any time.

### 24.3.3 Usury and Rate of Interest

Moneylending for personal needs and commercial purposes was an established practise. Much of trading was conducted through the money taken on interest. Generally the **sarrafs** and merchants both indulged in moneylending. Sometimes the moneylenders were called **Ṣah**, a distinct category. The loans were taken for various purposes. The money was taken on loan by peasants for paying revenue and repaid at harvest. Nobles and **zamindars** would take it for their day-to-day expenses and repay it at the time of revenue collection. Moneylending for business purposes was also very common.

The rate of interest for smaller loans is difficult to ascertain. It depended mainly on the individual's need, his credit in the market and his bargaining power. Tapan Roy Chaudhuri shows that peasants took loans at a high rate of 150 per cent per annum in Bengal in the eighteenth century. For commercial loans, the rate of interest differed from one region to another. Our sources generally refer to interest rates per month. Irfan Habib says that the rate of interest expressed for the month suggests that the loans were generally for short periods.

The rate of interest for Patna in 1620-21 is given as 9 per cent per annum, while around 1680 it seems more than 15 per cent. At Qasimbazar (Bengal) the rate of interest in 1679 is given as high as 15 per cent per annum while the rates for the corresponding period for Madras (8 per cent per annum) and Surat (9 per cent per annum) were much less. The English factory kept a vigilant eye on the interest rates and would supply money to their factories in various regions after taking loans from the places where interest was lowest. The rates at Agra and Surat during the 17th century ranged between 6 and 12 per cent per annum. On the Coromandal coast much higher rates (18 to 36 per cent) seem to have prevailed.

The difference in interest rates in various regions suggests that the integration of financial market had not taken place.

#### Bottomry

A number of uncertainties and risks were involved in long distance sea voyages. These uncertainties gave rise to a new practice called 'avog' or bottomry. It was a type of speculative investment which was quite popular during the period of our study. In Bottomry money was lent at high rates ranging between 14 to 60 per cent. The money was lent to be invested in a cargo for a particular destination. The rate of interest depended on the risks involved. The lenders were to bear all the risks of voyage.

### 24.3.4 Partnership

In partnership, the merchants pooled their resources to carry on trade. Some persons formed joint ventures for overseas trade. We hear of two nobles, Nawab Qutbuddin Khan and Nawab Qilich Khan having built a ship and taken to trading jointly during Akbar's reign. Banarsidas described his partners trade in jewels during 1611-16. Even brokers at times carried their joint ventures. In 1662, two brokers Chhota Thakur and Somiji of Surat, bought a ship (*Mayflower*) in partnership and fitted her for a voyage.

### 24.3.5 Insurance (Inland and Marine)

Another important commercial practise prevalent in India on a limited scale was that of insurance or **bima**. In many cases, the **sarrafs** used to take responsibility for the safe delivery of goods. The English factory records also refer to the insurance of goods, both inland and overseas. At sea, both the ship and the goods aboard were insured. The rates for insurance are also quoted in factory records. By the 18th century, the practice was well-established and widely practised. The rates are also available for different goods for different destinations. The rates for sea voyages were higher than goods going through land.

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## 24.4 MERCHANTS, TRADING ORGANISATIONS AND THE STATE

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We have already discussed in Units 20 and 23 the taxes charged by the state on trading activities. The merchants were also charged customs and toll taxes on movements of goods. However, the income from these sources was very small as compared to land revenue.

Since towns were the centres of commercial activities, the administrative officers there looked after the smooth conduct of trade. The maintenance of law and order and providing peace and security were important for better business environment. This was the responsibility of the **kotwal** and his staff in the towns.

The rules and laws governing the day-to-day business were generally framed by the business community itself. Merchants had their own guilds and organisations which framed rules. We get references to such organisations in our sources. In Gujarat, these were called **mahajan**. In the first quarter of the 18th century, we get evidence of 53 **mahajans** at Ahmedabad. The **mahajan** was the organisation of traders dealing in a specific commodity in a particular area irrespective of their castes. The term **mahajan** was at times used for big merchants also probably because they were the heads of their organisation. There were separate caste based organisations also.

The most influential and wealthy merchant of the town was called **nagar seth**. Sometimes it was treated as hereditary title, **Nagar seth** was a link between the state and the trading community.

If there were certain disputes among the merchants, the **mahajans** resolved them. Generally their decisions were respected by all. The Mughal administration also recognised these **mahajans** and took their help in matters of conflicts and disputes or to seek support for administrative policies. The merchant organisations were strong and fought against high-handedness or repressive measures of the officers of town and ports. We get a number of references where traders organisations gave calls for **hartal** (closing business establishments and shops) against administrative measures. The huge loss of revenue made administrators respond to the protest. One such serious conflict arose in Surat in 1669. Here a large number of businessmen along with their families (a total of 8000 people) left Surat to protest against the tyranny of the new governor. They settled at Broach and sent petitions to Emperor Aurangzeb. The trading activities in the town came to a halt. The Emperor quickly intervened and the problem was resolved. In 1639, Shah Jahan invited Virji Vohra, one of the biggest merchants of Surat, to enquire into the grievances of merchants against the governor of Surat. During the war of succession among Shah Jahan's sons, Murad raised Rs. 5,50,000 through Shantidas, the **nagar seth** of Ahmedabad. After Murad's death, Aurangzeb owned the responsibility for paying it.

The merchants in spite of huge resources (Virji Vohra is said to have left an estate of Rs.80,00,000 at his death) did not take much interest in politics.

While merchants kept away from court politics, the nobles did venture into trading. Many big nobles used their official position to corner the profits from trade.

Shaista Khan tried to monopolise a number of commodities, especially saltpetre. Mir Jumla, another prominent noble, was a diamond merchant. A number of subordinate officers at local level also indulged in business activities using coercive methods. The participation of nobles in trade has also been discussed in Unit 23 on **Inland and Foreign Trade**.

**Check Your Progress 3**

1) Write five lines on **hundi**.

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2) Write three lines on each of the following:

i) Usury

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ii) Insurance

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3) Write five lines on the trading organisation of merchants.

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**24.5 LET US SUM UP**

In this Unit, we studied the activities of a number of specialised groups concerned with trade. The **Banjaras** played their role at regional and inter-regional levels. They, with a large number of pack animals, moved in groups buying and selling mainly grain, salt and sugar, etc.

In different regions of the country various merchants groups and castes operated. Prominent Indian merchant groups were the **baniyas, bohras, khattris, chettis, komattis**, etc. The English, Dutch, French Portuguese, Armenians, Khurasanis and Iraqis were important foreign merchants.

Brokers, **sarrafs** and moneylenders were specialised groups. System of bills of exchange and money lending was very well developed. The interest rates were quite high.

Merchant guilds and organisation were well established. They generally made rules and regulations for trading and commercial activities.

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**24.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Banjaras dealt mainly in grain, salt and sugar etc. They moved in large groups. For details see Sub-section 24.2.1
- 2) **Marwari, Bohras, Multanis, Chetties, Komatis** etc. were different merchant groups. For their areas of operation see Sub-section 24.2.1



**Production and Trade**

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) **Sarrafi** worked as money changers, lenders and verified the purity of coins. See Sub-section 24.2.2.
- 2) **Brokers** worked as middlemen in commercial transactions. See different categories in Sub-section 24.2.4.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) **Hundi** was a convenient and safe method of transferring money. For details see Sub-section 24.3.1.
- 2) For both these practices see Sub-sections 24.3.3 and 24.3.5.
- 3) **Merchants** formed their organisations to protect their interests and formulate rules and regulations. For details see Section 24.4.



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# UNIT 25 THE EUROPEAN TRADING COMPANIES

## Structure

- 25.0 Objectives
- 25.1 Introduction
- 25.2 European Trading Companies in India: 1600-1750
  - 25.2.1 The Dutch East India Company
  - 25.2.2 The English East India Company
  - 25.2.3 The French East India Company
  - 25.2.4 Other European Trading Companies
- 25.3 Factories and Their Organisation
  - 25.3.1 The Dutch
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- 25.5 The Indian Rulers and the European Companies
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## 25.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the growth and expansion of the European trading companies in India;
- the European factories and the pattern of their internal organisation;
- the nature of state control over the European trading companies; and
- the Indian rulers' response and attitude towards these trading companies.

## 25.1 INTRODUCTION

In the present Unit, our discussion will confine to the European settlements in India till the close of our period, organisation of the factories of European trading companies in India and their relations with their parent countries and the Mughal/Indian rulers. We have already discussed in detail the organisation, location and the nature of the trading activities of the Portuguese in India in Unit 4 of Block 1. Here, the details of armed confrontations between the European companies and Indian states are omitted (for these details see course EHI-05). Questions concerning the trading interests of the European companies have been dealt with in Unit 23 of this Block.

The evolution of Nation States in Europe broke the European 'unified single economic system'. This coincided with the agricultural and industrial revolutions in Europe. Mercantilism also played its own role. All these factors created the need to look for new markets. With home markets having limited scope for consumption, foreign markets were the only answer. However, as you have already read in Unit 4, at that time the merchants of Venice and Genoa were enjoying trade monopoly over the Eastern Seas. There was strong urge on the part of other European merchants to break their monopoly, and hence the search for alternative routes to the East. This was possible because of great advance in shipbuilding and navigational technologies. It ultimately resulted in the discovery of a new route to the East via the Cape of Good Hope. This led to the European monopoly over the seas—first by the Portuguese and later by other European powers (the English, Dutch and French).

You will find that in the late 18th century, India had become the theatre of conflict among European trading companies (for further details see our course EHI-05). Besides the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French, there were other European nations also who were interested in the Eastern trade. But their trading activities were on a much smaller scale.

## 25.2 EUROPEAN TRADING COMPANIES IN INDIA: 1600-1750

In the present section, we will trace the advent of the European trading companies in India and their growth. This section will also cover the conflicting interests and armed clashes between them and India.

### 25.2.1 The Dutch East India Company

The Dutch East India Company was formed in 1602 through a charter. The Dutch were primarily interested in spice trade. Therefore, they paid more attention to the Far East. India was just a trading depot for them. They established their first factory at Petapuli in North Coromandal in 1606, followed by another at Masulipatam in the same year. Gradually, they realized that Indian textiles could be the best commodity for exchange with the spice islands (Indonesian Archipelago). This necessitated expansion of their network in India. They established their factories at Pulicat (1610), Cambay (1620), Surat and Agra (1621), Hariharpur (1633), Patna (1638), Dacca (1650), Udaiganj (1651), Chinsura (1653), Qasimbazar, Baranagore, Balasore and Negapatam (1659-60).

They had two factories in the interior of the Golkunda territories—one at Nagalavancha and another at Golkunda. The former was established in 1670, but owing to political unrest the Dutch withdrew from there in the 1680s. In Golkunda they established their factory in 1662. Once again, owing to the political disturbances (Mughal-Golkunda clashes, 1684-87) they withdrew from Golkunda also in 1684. By 1675 Hugli rose into prominence. It undermined the importance of the Dutch factory at Pipli (on the Orissa coast), and finally they abandoned it in 1675. Similarly, in 1658 the Dutch factories at Dacca and Udaiganj were also abandoned owing to armed attacks of the local raja. In the Bengal region two more factories were established by the Dutch in 1669 (Khanakul) and 1676 (Malda) but both had to close down soon.

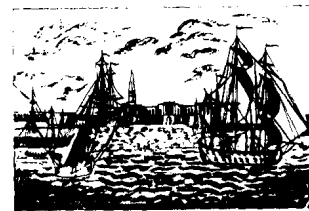
The rising power of the Dutch was looked upon as a threat by the English to their own vested interests. When the English established a factory at Masulipatam and opened trade at Petapuli, the Dutch interest lay in not allowing English to have a share in the Pulicat trade. This conflict of interests continued. However, in 1619 the Dutch managed to have a truce with the English and both agreed to become copartners in Indian trade. The English Company was allowed to share the Pulicat trade provided they bore half the maintenance cost of the Dutch fort and garrison there. But it did not last long. In 1623 and again in 1653-54, the Dutch attacked the English ships. Between 1672-74 the Dutch again tried to obstruct English settlements at Surat and Bombay and captured an English vessel in the Bay of Bengal. The English realized the supremacy of the Dutch over the Eastern Islands. They decided to drive them away from their Indian possessions. To fulfill their designs, the English joined hands with the Portuguese in India. Finally, they succeeded in defeating them at Bedara (1759) which weakened the Dutch opposition in India greatly. Since then the Dutch confined themselves to "country trade" in India. Whatever small possessions they had at Nagore and Negapatam were surrendered in 1773. By 1795, the English succeeded in expelling the Dutch completely from their Indian possessions. Even their hold on the Cape of Good Hope loosened in favour of the British.

### 25.2.2 The English East India Company

In 1599 the 'English Association of the Merchant Adventurers' was formed to trade with the East. This company (popularly known as the East India Company) got a Royal Charter with her trade monopoly in the East by Queen Elizabeth on

11 December 1600. In 1608 the English merchants decided to open their 'first' factory at Surat. By 1619, they succeeded in establishing factories at Agra, Ahmedabad and Broach.

Conditions were more favourable to establish a factory in the South as there was no strong Indian state in that part. Vijaynagar had faded away ever since their defeat in 1565. In the South, the English opened their first factory at Masulipatam in 1611. In 1626, another factory was opened at Aramgaon. In 1639, they got Madras on lease from the local Raja. Soon, they fortified it which came to be known as Fort St. George. They acquired the island of Bombay in 1668 and fortified it soon after. It was soon to supercede Surat (by 1687) as the headquarters of the Company on the west coast.



The English penetration in the East was comparatively late. They established their first factory in Orissa at Hariharpur and Balasore in 1633. In 1651, they got permission to trade at Hugli. Soon they also opened their factories at Patna (Bihar) and Qasimbazar (Bengal). In 1690, an English factory was opened at Sutanati which was later (1696) fortified. In 1698, the English acquired the **zamindari** of Sutanati, Kalikata and Govindpur, where they built the Fort William. Soon it grew into a big city and came to be known as Calcutta.

### 25.2.3 The French East India Company

The French were late comers to the Eastern trade. The French East India Company was founded in 1664. The first French factory was established at Surat in 1668. This was the place of prime importance to the English. But the Mughal-English armed clash at Hugli (see section 25.5) caused a serious setback to the English possessions and trade in India. It also provided an opportunity to the French to strike roots in India. In 1669, the French established their second factory at Masulipatam. In 1673, they got Pondicherry, and in 1674 the Nawab of Bengal granted them a site near Calcutta where in 1690-92 they built the town of Chandranagore.

The French, had to face the Dutch and English rivalry very soon. The Dutch merchants convinced the ruler of Golkunda about the aggressive designs of the French. Thus, Golkunda in coordination with the Dutch power, decided to expel the French from St. Thome (1674). Finally, the French had to surrender St. Thome.

Later, in the early 1690s, when the war broke out between France and the Netherlands, their Indian counterparts also raised their arms against each other. In 1693 the Dutch captured Pondicherry from them. The Dutch blocked the French commercial activities at Hugli. By 1720, the French control over Bantam, Surat and Masulipatam got loosened: "even it started selling its licences to others." But a revival came about in 1721. A new Company was reconstructed soon (1725) at Mahe (on the Malabar coast). In 1739, they opened their factory at Karikal.

There was fierce rivalry between the English and the French. Clashes in India began with the war between the two countries (France and Britain) in Europe in 1742 leading to the three 'Carnatic wars' (1746-48; 1749-54; 1758-63). The decisive battle was fought at Wandiwash (January, 1766). The French were defeated and lost almost all their possession in India (for further details see our course EHI-05).

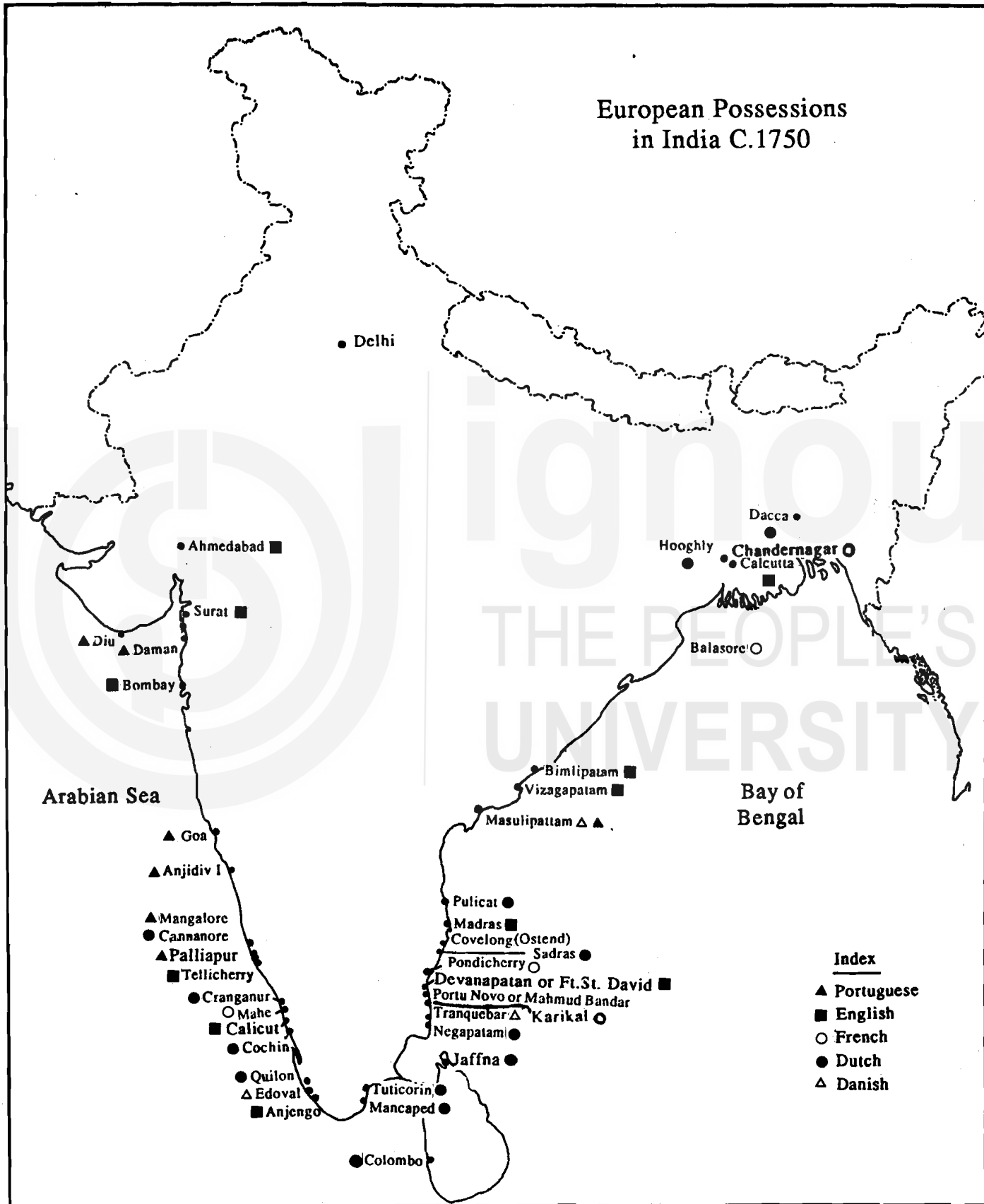
Now the English supremacy over other European Companies was complete. The Portuguese had to be content with Goa, Daman and Diu, while the French were confined to Pondicherry, Karikal, and Mahe. The scene was now left open for English aggrandisement (for details, see course EHI-05).

### 25.2.4 Other European Trading Companies

The Danes entered as traders in 1616 but with no ambition to establish an Empire. They managed to secure the Tranquebar port from the Nayak of Tanjore in 1620 and built a fort there. But the overall resources available to them were extremely scant. They also established their factories at Masulipatam, Porto Novo and Serampur (1755). However, their success was limited, and ultimately they sold off their factories to the English and finally quit India in 1845.

The Swedish East India Company was formed in 1731, but its activities were directed exclusively towards China rather than India. The Flanders merchants established the Ostend Company in 1722 but their activities were also limited in India.

## European Possessions in India C.1750



**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Critically analyse the Dutch-English rivalries for the control of Indian seas.

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2) Fill in the blanks:

- i) The Dutch East India Company was formed in the year .....
- ii) The English Association of merchant adventurers was established in ..... (year).
- iii) First English factory in India was established in ..... (year) at ..... (place).
- iv) The British acquired the island of Bombay in ..... (year).
- v) French established their factory at Chandranagore in ..... (year).
- vi) Battle of Wandiwash was fought in ..... (year) between ..... and .....

**25.3 FACTORIES AND THEIR ORGANISATION**

You have already read in Unit 4 of Block 1 how the European trading Companies established their factories in the East. These factories were not manufacturing depots: they were warehouses. They were often fortified. In the present section we will describe the internal organisation of their factories in India.

**25.3.1 The Dutch**

The Dutch East India Company's chief administrative centre was at Batavia. This establishment was headed by the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies and a Council. It controlled all the Dutch factories in Asia. The Council was responsible to the Central Board of Directors known as "Gentlemen XVII" who met for six years in succession at the Chamber of Amsterdam followed by two years at the Chamber of Zeeland.

A 'factor' was appointed at each station (factory). These factors used to send regular reports to Batavia regarding trading activities of the region, the list of ships, commodities exported and imported, etc.

The Dutch factories at Coromandal were administered by a Directorate headed by a Director (designated as governor in 1615) at Pulicat. Prior to 1655 the Dutch factories in Bengal were controlled and administered by the Coromandal 'factor'. However, in 1655 a separate 'Directorate' independent of the 'government' at Pulicat was formed at Hugli. This gave great impetus to the Dutch trade in Bengal. In the 1690s, the seat of the Dutch administrative machinery in Coromandal also shifted from Pulicat to Negapatnam.

In India each factory was administered by a Council consisting of the director, a senior factor, the incharge of the Company's trade-books, a law enforcement officer, the incharge of the warehouses, the incharge of the loading and unloading of the ships and six junior factors, one of whom acted as secretary to the Council. Their salaries were not very lucrative.

**25.3.2 The English**

As for the internal management of the English Company it was administered by a 'Court of Committees' whose nomenclature later was changed to 'Court of Directors' in 1709. It consisted of a governor, a dupty governor, and 24 members to be elected annually by a general body of the merchants forming the Company. Besides, there was a secretary and a treasurer. Its members were known as Directors. The Company's superior body 'Court of Directors' was based in London while its

subordinate body was in Asia. The directors were to be annually elected by the shareholders of the Company meeting in a 'Court of Proprietors'. Each shareholder, irrespective of the value of the share, had only one vote. The membership of the Company was not confined to shareholders only. But it could be secured through inheritance or presentation by paying an entrance fee through apprenticeship, services, etc.

The Company enjoyed extensive powers to issue orders and to make laws in accordance with the laws and customs of the realm. The Company also possessed judicial powers to punish its servants for their offences by imprisonment or fine.

In India, each factory was administered by a Governor-in-Council. The governor was the President of the 'Council' with no extra privileges. Everything was decided in the 'Council' by majority votes. The members of the 'Council' consisted of senior merchants of the Company.

While the 'Court of Directors' was the supreme authority in framing policies for the Company, the rights of its presidencies in Asia were limited. Generally, various day-to-day matters were directly referred to the sub-committees unless the matter was for the consideration of the Court. The Presidents and the members of the Council in Asia could communicate directly with the 'Court' or the Secretary of the Company at home (London). But this **freedom** and **privilege** were rarely given to the factories under the authority of the presidencies. As measure of check, the Court at London encouraged the senior officials to report separately on various subjects. Thus, information generally got duplicated and discrepancies could be checked.

The maintenance and implementation of the policies of the Company obviously rested upon the Company's President and Council in India.

The administration of the English factories of the Eastern coast was governed from Fort St. George (Madras) having their President and Council stationed there. The Council advised the governor in administrative matters.

In 1700, English factories in Bengal were placed under the separate control of a President and Council located at Calcutta.

### 25.3.3 The French

The French East India Company's headquarters in India was at Surat which was later shifted to Pondicherry. The supreme body was known as 'Superior Council of the Indies' and headed by a Director-General. He was the overall incharge of the French affairs in India. The Supreme Council composed of five members was presided over by the governor. The entire administration was in his hands. Though laws were enacted in the name of the French king, the governor and the counsellors could be removed without any reference to the French king. All the colonial officers were subordinate to the Council.

One notable feature of the French East India Company was the constant quarrels and jealousies of the French officials in India which ultimately affected the smooth development of French interests in India. In the 1670s, Caron got envious of the remarkable success of his fellow Frenchman Marcara. Though, ultimately Marcara succeeded in convincing the French government about baselessness of the charges, the seeds of conflicts and clashes thus sown from the very inception of the French factories in India proved harmful. Similarly, in 1726, Dupleix was suspended from his office and it was only in 1730 that the suspension order was withdrawn and he was appointed 'Intendant' or Director of Chandranagore.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What was Gentlemen XVII?

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2) Describe the functioning of the 'Court of Committees'.

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## 25.4 PARENTAL CONTACT AND CONTROL

In this section we will discuss the European trading Companies' relations with their parent country.

### 25.4.1 The Dutch

The Dutch East India Company was established through a charter granted by the Dutch Government (States General). The Company was to be governed through 17 Directors commonly known as 'Gentlemen XVII'. Dutch East India Company had a unique feature in that its shareholders did not have any control over the managing body. Though States General was the final controlling power the Gentlemen XVII enjoyed real powers and worked as a state within the state. In 1644 Gentlemen XVII told the States General: "the places and strong-holds which had been captured in the East should not be regarded as national conquests, but as the property of private individuals".

Batavian Governor-General-in-Council enjoyed almost sovereign authority in so far as the Dutch East Indian trade was concerned. The Council at Batavia was an efficient administrative body. Each factor in the East was asked to send regular reports. Periodic inspection by senior officers was also done. It was difficult for the Gentlemen XVII to interfere and check Council's activities on account of the long distances and absence of speedy means of communications. Gentlemen empowered Batavian Governor General in Council to enter into treaties with the rulers in the region to the east of Cape of Good Hope, to build fortresses and garrisons and appoint governors, etc. But all the treaties were concluded in the name of the Dutch state. The Dutch East India Company at home did not favour promotion of trade by showing the strength of arms. They often instructed the Governor-General-in-Council to avoid armed clashes as far as possible. But, its factors realised that trade in India was impossible without indulging in war and show of armed strength. The Directors of the Company at home were heavily dependent for information upon Batavian Council which in turn collected informations through factors stationed at various places in India and other eastern countries. At times Governor General at Batavia and factors in India often tried to twist certain orders. In 1616, when the Dutch Director at home issued an order that "the subjugation of Amboina and Banda islands were of prime importance and all foreign nations should be barred from this trade"; Governor General of Batavia in the wake of Anglo-Dutch clashes decided not to use force against the English. Director General Coen, on the other hand, interpreted the instructions as a mandate—to use force against English to drive them out from the Spice Islands. As a result, Batavian Council decided not to endorse Coen's actions. But, by August 1616, Coen succeeded in getting the sanction from Gentlemen XVII. That resulted in Governor General's (Raynet Reael) resignation and Coen's taking over the control.

Often rivalries existed within the factories. When Coen appointed Ravesteyn as administrative head in Western India, Goeree simply refused to accept his authority. The crisis could be solved only when in 1620 Coen sent Pieter van den Broecke to Surat with the responsibility for supervising the activities of the Dutch factories in Western India and Persia. Pieter Van den Broecke rejected the directives from Batavia which advocated the capture of indigenous merchant vessel. Jan Van Hasel continued to deny the borrowing of money from local lenders for commodity purchases despite the directives from Batavia and Gentlemen XVII who ordered to use only Company's capital for such purchases. Thus despite Company's attempts to rationalize its administrative procedures the Company's de facto control over factors and factories was impeded due to the unreliability of communications.



### 25.4.2 The English

In the early 17th century, the English East India Company was the single largest Company of England. It strictly adhered to monopoly with regard to Eastern trade vis-a-vis other English merchants. Therefore, from the very beginning it attempted to oust rival mercantile interests from the Eastern Seas and to secure exclusive privileges. No non-member was allowed to trade with the East. This naturally created dissatisfaction among those English merchants who were denied their share in the huge profits from the Eastern trade. These merchants tried to influence political leaders but the Company somehow (through bribes, etc.) managed to retain its privileges upto Charles II's reign. In spite of all opposition these merchants, known as 'interlopers' continued to defy the monopoly of the Company by indulging in the East Indian trade on their own. By 1688 the situation turned favourable when in British Parliament they became supreme. These "Free Merchants" tried to press their demands in public as well as in Parliament. In 1694, the Parliament passed the resolution that all the citizens of England had equal right to trade in the East. This resulted in the formation of 'New Company'. But the 'Old Company' refused to surrender their privileges. Finally, after long drawn conflicts, both the Companies agreed to join hands and a new company, "The Limited Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies", was formed in 1708.

There existed close relationship between the Company and the Crown. Queen Elizabeth herself was one of the shareholders of the Company. After Queen Elizabeth's death (1603), James I renewed the charter (1609) though it could be revoked at any time at three years' notice. In 1615, the Company got the power to enforce law to maintain discipline on long voyages. The charter of 1623 further enhanced the Company's powers of controlling and punishing its servants.

However, the Company had to face tough time under Charles I. In 1635, Charles I permitted Sir William Courten to set up a new trading body to trade with the East Indies under the Courten's Association, named the 'Assada Company'. But the latter could hardly put up any strong competition to the East India Company.

The situation again changed under Oliver Cromwell who supported the interests of the Company. In 1657, he granted a new charter that resulted in the union of Courten's 'Association' and the 'Old Company'. This charter was important for it changed the very character of the Company. Earlier, its shareholders used to contribute as per voyage converted into one single joint-stock company with continuous flow of stock. Now anyone could become a member of the Company by an entrance fee of £5 and by a subscription of £100 to the Company's stock. To have the right to vote, one had to be a shareholder of £500, and to be elected a member of the committee his shares should be worth £1000. The term of governor and deputy-governor was reduced to two years.

Another charter was granted to the Company in 1661 by Charles II. By this charter, the Company was empowered to appoint governors and subordinate officers for administration. Their judicial powers to punish were enhanced. The Company also got the right to empower the governor and the Council of its each factory to supervise the persons employed under them according to the English law. The charter of 1668 was the major step in the transition of the Company from a mere trading body to a territorial power. As we have mentioned earlier, in 1669 the Company procured territorial rights over Bombay. Now the Company could freely make laws and issue ordinances for governing the island. The Company even secured the right to mint money at Bombay in 1676. The charter of 1683 further granted the Company to raise military forces within a prescribed limit, and to declare war on or make peace with America, Africa and Asia. In 1687, the Company was permitted to establish a municipality and a Mayor's court at Madras.

The Glorious Revolution (1688), however, gave a great jolt to the rising power of the Company. By the charter of 1693, one could subscribe shares of more than £10,000. Similarly, the minimum limit to qualify for vote also extended from £500 to \$1000 and instead of one vote, now a single member could have a maximum number of 10 votes. In 1694, the principle of rotation of officers was made compulsory. Out of 24 members, 8 were to retire every year. The qualification for the right to vote once again was reduced from £1000 to £500; now each member could enjoy the right to 5 votes instead of earlier 10. This charter was followed by a number of charters in 1709, 1711, 1726, 1734, 1744, 1754, 1757 through which the Company succeeded in

ensuring more and more military and administrative powers for the Company in lieu of huge loans granted by the Company to the Crown and the Parliament.

### 25.4.3 The French

The French East India Company was a state controlled organisation and thus differed from the Chartered Companies of England and the Netherland. The French East India Company was highly dependent on the French government for its grants, subsidies, loans, etc. After 1723, it was almost wholly controlled by the French government with Directors as its representative. Its shareholders were mostly nobles and rentiers and not merchants. They were more interested in short term dividends. With an autocratic, corrupt and decadent French government, such level of control was obviously harmful for the French East India Company.

For all practical purposes, the Directors had no power. Even the shareholders seldom met, and when they did they had no say in the presence of royal officials or the king. The 'Assemblee Generale' also could hardly think of rejecting any proposal of the Syndics or Directors which had the ministerial approval.

The French East India Company was bankrupt almost from the beginning. To reorganise the Company, general assemblies were called in 1684. The Directors nominated by the king were supposed to hold the post for life. After the death of a director, another one could be chosen through election by the surviving directors and other stockholders with at least 20,000 livres. Administration was entirely in the hands of 12 directors who were to receive 3000 livres annually.

In 1688, eight new directorships were created. These directors were to pay 60,000 livres each as appointment 'fee'. In 1697, the ordinary stockholders unsuccessfully demanded their own representatives in the Company's administration.

In 1721-23, attempts were made again to reconstitute the Company. The Company, after 1730, became a national East India Company. The 12 directors were hardly more than 'clerks' under a state appointed 'Council des Indes' consisting of royal councillors, naval officers, and prominent merchants. The provision to select 6 syndics or directors by the shareholders to represent shareholders remained in the abeyance till 1745 when the shareholders were permitted to nominate 12 persons out of whom the king chose 6. After 1730, the Council transmitted its orders through one Royal Commissioner. The successive Controleues-General and navy ministers were actually controlling the Company. The lion's share of the capital remained in the hands of the directors.

The Company's headquarter was in Paris. But it had equally large staff at Lorient under the charge of a resident director.

The French Company owned its own fleet. But the wastage in the French East India Company was higher than in the other two large East India Companies.

From 1769-1785, and again after the French Revolution (1789), the French East India trade was thrown open to individuals.

#### Check Your Progress 3

1) Who were 'interlopers'? Describe their clash with the English East India Company.

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2) In what way French East India Company differed from its counterpart English East India Company?

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## 25.5 THE INDIAN RULERS AND THE EUROPEAN COMPANIES

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The Mughals and the Indian rulers were interested in the development of India's overseas trade. They wanted it as it would have increased their revenue resources. Therefore, in spite of all odds, the Mughal Emperors and the local Indian rulers, in general, welcomed foreign merchants. However, the Mughals and other Indian rulers were weak on the seas. To ensure smooth sailing of the Indian ships it was necessary for them to align with one or the other powerful European power who were masters of the seas. You will notice so long as the Mughals were strong, the European merchants followed the policy of seeking concessions through petitions and presents. The Companies also combined trade and diplomacy with war and control of the territory where their factories were situated. With the weakening of the Mughal power, the European Companies started imposing their will on the Indian rulers to get monopolies and concessions. They also took full advantage of the internal conflicts. (For details see our Course EHI-05.)

### 25.5.1 The Dutch

The Dutch got favourable response from the rulers of Golkunda. They granted them concessions to trade on payment of 4 per cent customs duty on their exports and imports. The Company was also given exemption from duty on cloth (which amounted to about 12 per cent). In 1612, the duty of 4 per cent was commuted into a fixed payment of 3000 pagodas annually.

The chief feature of the Company's relation with the Indian rulers was that in spite of getting concessions from the Indian rulers, the local officials constantly used their power to evade the orders and imposed duties on Company's trade. It frequently resulted in clashes with the local officials. In June 1616, the Dutch had to close down their factory at Petapuli owing to the exorbitant demands of the local **havaladar**. In 1619 also the Dutch were virtually on the brink of closing down their factory at Masulipatam owing to the local **havaladar's** oppression, but the Golkunda ruler acted promptly and replaced Mir Qasim, the local **havaladar**. In 1636, the Dutch had to abandon their factory at Hugli owing to harassment by the local officials and rivalries of local merchants, etc. (the factory was later reopened in 1645-50). They were also exempted from the custom dues at Masulipatam on payment of 3000 pagodas. In 1657 they got from the Golkunda king the right to mint coin in the Pulicat mint. They collected the mint duty of 5.38 per cent. By the **farman** of 1676, the Golkunda ruler granted the Dutch complete freedom from tariffs in Golkunda.

In the 1680s, the Dutch had to resort to arms owing to their conflict with the Golkunda minister Akanna. In 1686, they occupied the port of Masulipatam. The siege continued for two months. Ultimately Golkunda had to come to terms, and the king agreed to restore all previous privileges.

In 1690, the Nayak of Tanjore allowed the Dutch to pay only half of the toll in all parts of his kingdom. They also got the right to keep other Europeans out from the ports of Tanjore. They also received the right to mint coins at Nagapatam. The Bijapur ruler also confirmed all the privileges granted to them by the Nayak of Jinji in 1651.

For trade along the west coast, the Dutch succeeded in getting **farman** from the Mughal Emperor Jahangir. They were exempted from tolls from Burhanpur to Cambay and Ahmedabad. Shah Jahan also issued two **farmans** granting them permission to trade in Bengal (1635) and at Surat. In 1638, the Company got another **farman** from Shah Jahan to trade in saltpetre as well. In 1642, Shah Jahan exempted the Dutch from the payment of transit duties along the Pipli-Agra route. In 1662 Aurangzeb confirmed all the privileges granted by Shah Jahan to the Dutch in Bengal. This was followed by another **farman** in 1689 by which Aurangzeb permitted all the concessions enjoyed by the Dutch in Golkunda which was shortly occupied by the Mughals. Shah Alam (1709) even reduced customs duty from 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> per cent to 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>.

per cent at Surat and Hugli. He also granted total exemption to the Company from paying transit dues throughout the Mughal Empire. But, owing to the hinderances posed by the local officials, the Dutch factors sometimes could not avail of the **rahdari** exemptions. Similarly, to oblige the local officials, they had to spend a handsome sum. But the Company often misused their privilege of carrying duty-free goods. Instead of carrying their own goods, the Company often helped Indian merchants in evading customs at Hugli. In 1712, Jahandar Shah confirmed all the privileges granted by Aurangzeb in Coromandal. However, the local authorities were not ready to surrender the privileges granted by Jahandar Shah. A major conflict broke out at Palakottu and Drakshavaram in 1725-30, and the Dutch factory was attacked and plundered (1728).

### 25.5.2 The English

It was during Jahangir's reign that the first English envoy reached the Mughal court and received a royal **farman** in 1607. In 1608, when the English established their first factory at Surat, Captain Hawkins was sent to Jahangir's court for securing trading concessions. Jahangir, initially, welcomed the English envoy and a **mansab** of 400 **zat** was bestowed on him by the Emperor. Though in 1611 Hawkins got permission to open trade at Surat, later, under the Portuguese influence, he was expelled from Agra. The English realised that if they wanted any concessions from the Mughal court, they had to counter the Portuguese influence. It resulted in armed conflict between the two at Swally near Surat (1612, 1614). It bore fruits. The Mughals wanted to counter the Portuguese naval might by joining hands with the English. Besides, they also wanted benefits for Indian merchants who could aspire to gain better profits in case of competition between the foreign merchants. Soon, Captain Best succeeded in getting a royal **farman** (January, 1613) to open factories in the west coast—Surat, Cambay, Ahmedabad and Goga.

In 1615, Sir Thomas Roe was sent to Jahangir's court. He tried to take advantage of the naval weakness of Indian rulers. They harassed the Indian traders and ships. These pressures resulted in the issue of another **farman** by which the English merchants got the right to open factories in all parts of the Mughal Empire. The English success led to an English-Portuguese conflict from 1620 to 1630 to the advantage of the English. After that, the Portuguese gradually lost almost all of their Indian possessions except Goa, Daman and Diu. In 1662, they gave the island of Bombay to king Charles II of England in dowry.

During the closing years of Jahangir's reign when the English Company tried to fortify their factory at Surat, they were imprisoned by the Mughal officers. When the Company's rival group of English merchants attacked Mughal ships, the President of the Company at Surat was imprisoned by the Mughals and could only be released on payment of £1,80,00.

In 1651, the English East India Company got a **nishan** from Sultan Shuja, the son of Shah Jahan, the then governor of Bengal. By this **nishan** they received trading privileges in return for a fixed annual payment of Rs. 3000. By another **nishan** in 1656 the English Company was exempted from custom dues. However, after Shuja's withdrawal from Bengal his successors ignored his orders for the obvious reason that it affected the treasury. But later Shaista Khan (1672) and Emperor Aurangzeb's **farman** finally ensured a custom-free English trade.

During Aurangzeb's reign, we notice some changes in the Mughal-English Company's relations. By this time the English Company with fortified settlements at Madras and Bombay felt more strong. Aurangzeb himself was busy in his Deccan campaigns. Now they could well think of abandoning their role as humble petitioners. By the use of force they could now dictate prices and acquire a free hand in trade. They were planning to establish trade monopoly by gradually driving out all other European powers from competition.

In 1686, the English declared war against the Mughal Emperor and sacked Hugli. However, they were highly mistaken in assessing the Mughal might. Unlike their counterparts in South India, the Mughals were more than a match to a small trading Company. It resulted in the latter's humiliation. They had to lose all their possessions in Bengal. Their factories at Surat, Masulipatam and Vishakhapatam were seized and their fort at Bombay was besieged.

Realising the Mughal might they again went back to their old policy of “petition and diplomacy”. They again turned humble petitioners and agreed to trade under the protection of the Indian rulers.

Soon, the Mughals pardoned them considering the advantage of increasing foreign trade. Aurangzeb granted them permission to trade on payment of Rs. 1,50,000 as compensation. In 1691, the English Company succeeded in getting exemption from the grant of custom duties in Bengal on an annual payment of Rs. 3000. In 1698, the English king sent a special envoy Sir William Norris to Aurangzeb’s court to secure the formal grant of the trading concessions and the right to exercise full English jurisdiction over the English settlements. In 1714-17 another mission was sent under Surman who was able to procure three **farmans** from Farrukh Siyar that exempted them from paying custom dues in Gujarat and Deccan as well. In Bengal so long as Murshid Quli Khan and Ali Vardi Khan remained on the scene, they strictly checked the corruption of any of the privileges granted to the Company. But immediately after their departure (1750s), the Company got an opportunity to intrigue and soon succeeded in defeating the Nawab of Bengal in 1757 at the battle of Plassey. (For details see course EHI-05.)

The rulers of Golkunda also maintained friendly relations with the English Company. In 1632, the ruler of Golkunda issued a **farman** by which they were allowed to trade freely in the ports belonging to Golkunda on payment of 500 **pagodas** irrespective of the volume of trade. This certainly gave a great boost to English trade in the Coromandal region.

### 25.5.3 The French

The French had to face the wrath of the Marathas (Shivaji) as early as 1677. French commander (later Director General of French affairs in India) Martin readily acknowledged the authority of Shivaji and agreed to pay him an amount in lieu of a licence to trade in his dominions. Shivaji accepted the French request on the condition that they would not participate in military operations against him. In 1689, the French got the permission to fortify Pondicherry (from Sambhaji). The French also succeeded in getting a **farman** from Aurangzeb as early as 1667 to open their factory at Surat. In 1688 the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb ceded Chandranagore village to the French. The French maintained close ties with Dost-Ali the Nawab of Carnatic. On the basis of a strong recommendation by him the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah issued a **farman** granting permission to the French to mint and issue gold and silver currency bearing the stamp of the Mughal Emperor and the name of the place of minting.

A change in the political situation in South provided the French with an opportunity to interfere in the internal affairs of Indian rulers. In 1738 civil war broke out at Tanjore following the death of Venkaji’s grandson Baba Sahib. Sahuji, another claimant to the throne, approached the French governor M. Duman for help. In return the French got Karikal and Kirkangarhi. Sahuji’s reluctance to cede the promised territory provided the opportunity to Chanda Sahib, (son-in-law of Dost-Ali, Nawab of Carnatic) to act promptly and he promised the French Karikal and Kirkangarhi if they allowed him to occupy parts of Tanjaur. But soon Chanda Sahib had to face the wrath of the Marathas which compelled him to seek the French help. Muhammad Shah on hearing about the successful French resistance to Marathas granted M. Dumas the title of Nawab and bestowed upon him a **mansabs** of 4500/2000. The French involvement in the affairs of the principalities of South India ultimately resulted in Carnatic wars and the defeat of the French (details of Carnatic wars and the politics related to Anglo-French clashes etc. are dealt in our course EHI-05).

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Why did the Mughal Emperors and the Indian rulers promote the establishment of European Trading Companies?

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- 2) Why the local officials were reluctant to allow the European merchants the privileges granted by the Indian rulers? What was its result?

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## 25.6 LET US SUM UP

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With the discovery of the new sea-route via the Cape of Good Hope, the Eastern trade was thrown open to all the European nations. During this period, the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French merchant Companies established their factories in Africa and Asia. The European Companies were interested in gaining more and more concessions from the Indian rulers. Their desire to have monopoly over the Eastern trade brought them into conflict on the seas as well as on the land. In India, by the 1750's, the English emerged victorious and cultivated designs to establish an Empire in India.

The Portuguese, Dutch and English Companies were primarily merchant companies. However, the French East India Company was heavily dependent on the French government. All the European Companies had fortified factories in India. These factories served not only as warehouses but also were great repository of arms and armoury. In India, their chief was President/Governor. But all powers flowed from their parent country. The Dutch East India Company was directly answerable to Batavia which in turn was connected to the headquarters at Hague.

These Companies tried to maintain good relations with the Mughals and other Indian rulers. But they combined the strategy of flattery, petition and gifts with the show of arms to gain strength. The Indian rulers were also interested in encouraging the establishment of European Companies for getting revenue through trade taxes. The European Companies found South India easy to penetrate and dictate their terms to weak Nayak and the Deccan rulers. But, throughout the 17th century, they found it often difficult to cow down the mighty Mughals. Any such attempts were well thwarted. However, as soon as the Central power showed signs of decadence, the European Companies, especially the English, succeeded in getting concessions at will.

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## 25.7 KEY WORDS

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**Country Trade:** foreign companies indulging in inland trade in India.

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## 25.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-section 25.2.1. Analyse the interests of the two Companies in India; give reasons for the Dutch surrender and discuss how ultimately were they satisfied with 'country trade'.
- 2) i) 1602 ii) 1599 iii) 1608, Surat  
iv) 1668 v) 1690-92 vi) 1760, England, France

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 25.3.1
- 2) See Sub-section 25.3.2. At first define what constituted this committee? Also provide its powers

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) See Sub-section 25.4.2. After defining them analyse such questions as to what were their clash of interests with the English East India Company? Why they were opposing the 'monopoly' of the English East India Company and what was the result of the conflict?
- 2) Read carefully Sub-sections. 25.4.2, 25.4.3. Mention that the English East India Company was a merchants' organisation while the French Company heavily depended on the French government. Also mention how this played crucial role in the weakening of the French power in India.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) See Section 25.5. Critically examine that they wanted to develop the Indian overseas trade so that it could prove beneficial for their own merchants and craftsmen. Also write how it would have strengthened their finances as well?
- 2) Read Section 25.5 and its Sub-secs. carefully. This meant the loss of revenue resources which they were supposed to collect. Discuss how it quite often resulted in armed clashes between the two?



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**SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK**

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- Irfan Habib : **Agrarian System of Mughal India** (Out of Print)
- Tapan Raychaudhuri : **The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol-I**
- W.H. Moreland : **India at the Death of Akbar**
- S. Arasaratnam : **The Dutch East India Company and its Coromandal Trade, 1700-1740**
- K.N. Chaudhuri : **The English East India Company: the Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company, 1600-1640**



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# UNIT 26 POPULATION IN MUGHAL INDIA

## Structure

- 26.0 Objectives
- 26.1 Introduction
- 26.2 Estimates of Population of Mughal India
  - 26.2.1 On the Basis of the Extent of Cultivated Area
  - 26.2.2 Applying Civilian: Soldier Ratio
  - 26.2.3 Using Total and Per Capita Land Revenue
- 26.3 Average Rate of Population Growth
  - 26.3.1 Comparison with Contemporary Europe
  - 26.3.2 Implications of the Rate of Growth
- 26.4 Composition of the Population: Rural and Urban
- 26.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 26.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 26.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit will enable you to know :

- the various estimates of population of Mughal India in 1601;
- the different methods of estimating pre-census Indian population;
- the average annual rate of population growth during the 17th-18th centuries;
- the size of urban population in Mughal India.

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## 26.1 INTRODUCTION

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As is well known, the Indian population statistics properly begin only with the census of 1872. For the Mughal Empire, there is practically absolute dearth of demographic data: Akbar is said to have ordered a detailed account of population, but its result have not come down to us. Even the *A'in-i Akbari* with all the variety of statistical information that it contains, offers no estimate of the number of people for the whole of Akbar's Empire or any part of it.

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## 26.2 ESTIMATES OF POPULATION OF MUGHAL INDIA

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It was, however, hard to rest content with an admission that a definitive demographic history of India from c. 1601 to 1872 is impossible. No phase of economic history can be studied without allowing for demographic factor. For pre-modern societies, population growth is often considered as a major index of economic growth. It is, therefore, legitimate to attempt estimating the Indian population on the basis of quantitative data of diverse kind that are available to us.

### 26.2.1 On the Basis of the Extent of Cultivated Area

Moreland made the first attempt to estimate the population with the help of the data of the *A'in-i Akbari*. He tried to determine the population of Northern India on the basis of the figures given in the *A'in*. This work gives figures for *arazi* (measured area) which he took to represent the gross cropped area. Comparing the *arazi* with the gross cultivation at the beginning of this century and assuming a constant correspondence between the extent of cultivation and the size of the population right through the intervening period, he concluded that from "Multan to Monghyr" there were 30 to 40 million people at the end of the 16th century.

### 26.2.2 Applying Civilian: Soldier Ratio

For the Deccan and South India, Moreland took as the basis of his calculations the military strength of the Vijaynagar Empire and Deccan Sultanates. Taking a rather arbitrary ratio of 1:30 between the soldiers and civilian population, he estimated the population of the reign at 30 millions. Allowing for other territories lying within the pre-1947 limits of India but not covered by his two basic assumptions, he put the population of Akbar's Empire in 1600 at 60 millions, and of India as a whole at 100 millions.

These estimates received wide acceptance. Nevertheless, Moreland's basic assumptions (and therefore his figures) are questionable. For estimating the population of Northern India he makes the assumptions that (a) measurement was made of the cultivated land only; and (b) it was carried out by the Mughal administration to completion in all localities for which any figures are offered.

It has been shown on the basis of textual as well as statistical evidence that the **arazi** of the **A'in** was area measured for revenue purposes which included, besides the cultivated area current, fallows and some cultivable and uncultivable waste. Moreover, measurement by no means was completed everywhere.

Thus, Moreland's estimate of the population of Northern India loses much of its credibility. It is weaker still for Deccan and South India. The army: civilian ratio is not only arbitrary but undependable; the comparison with the pre-World War I France and Germany seems, in particular to be quite inept, since the military: civilian ratios maintainable in modern states and economies are so variable. Any of these can by no stretch of the imagination be used to set limits for the range of military: civilian ratios in pre-modern regimes in the tropical zones. This is apart from the fact that Moreland's count of the number of troops in the Deccan kingdoms was based on very general statements by European travellers.

However, Moreland has given inadequate weight to the areas outside the two regions. To make an appropriate allowance for these regions, Kingsley Davis raised Moreland's estimate for the whole of India to 125 millions in his book **Population of India and Pakistan**. This modification, reasonable insofar as it goes, does not, of course, remove the more substantial objections to Moreland's method indicated above.

In spite of the various objections to the estimates of Moreland, it still remains legitimate to use the extent of cultivation to make an estimate of population. The **arazi** figures of the **A'in** can provide the means of working out the extent of cultivation in 1601.

Making allowance for cultivable and uncultivable waste included in the **arazi** and establishing the extent of measurement in various parts of the Mughal Empire, Shireen Moosvi in her book **Economy of the Mughal Empire** has concluded that the area under cultivation in Mughal Empire in 1601 was about 55 per cent of the cultivated area in the corresponding region in 1909-10.

This estimate receives further reinforcement from the extent of cultivation worked out by Ifran Habib from a detailed analysis and comparison of the number and size of villages in various regions of the Empire in the 17th century and in 1881. Ifran Habib suggests that the area under plough in the 17th century was more than one-half but less than two-thirds of the ploughed area in 1900.

On the basis of the above mentioned analysis, Shireen Moosvi makes the following three assumptions:

- i) The total cultivation in 1601 was 50 to 55 per cent of what it was during the first decade of the present century.
- ii) The urban population was 15 per cent of the total and, thus, the rural population was 85 per cent of the total population.
- iii) The average agricultural holding in 1601 was 107 per cent larger than in 1901.

She gives the estimate of the population of India in the 17th century as between 140 and 150 millions.

### 26.2.3 Using Total and Per Capita Land Revenue

Another significant attempt to estimate population, by using different kinds of data was made by Ashok V. Desai. This required rather complex assumptions. Desai compared the purchasing power of the lowest urban wages on the basis first of prices and wages given in the A'in and, then, of all-India average prices and wages of the early 1960s. The yields and crop-rates given by Abul Fazl provide him with a means of measuring the total food consumption in Akbar's time which was 1/5th of what it was in the 1960s (cultivation was then concentrated in the areas with highest yields). He found that the productivity per unit of the area should have been 25 to 30 per cent higher in 1595 than in 1961. This in turn enables him to estimate the productivity per worker in agriculture at a level twice as high in 1595 as in 1961.

Basing himself on the statistics of consumption in the 1960s, Desai extrapolated the level of consumption in 1595 and found that the consumption level was somewhere between 1.4 and 1.8 times the modern level. He then proceeds to breakdown the average consumption at the end of the 16th century for each major agricultural item.

With these figures at hand and taking into account other relevant modern data, Desai worked out the area under the various crops per capita which he then multiplied by the revenue rates, to estimate per capita land revenue.

Dividing the total **jama** (which Desai treats as the total land revenue) by this estimated per capita revenue, the population of the Empire works out at about 65 millions which confirms Moreland's estimate.

Desai's assumptions and method have been criticised by Alan Heston and Shireen Moosvi. Heston's main objection is that the yields for 1595 have been overestimated. While Shireen Moosvi makes some more serious objections, namely, he used modern all-India statistics to compare with 16th century data. Since the prices and wages in the A'in are those of the imperial camp and, therefore, apply to Agra (and possibly to Lahore), it is surely inappropriate to compare these with modern all-India average. In the same way, the A'in's standard crop-rates applied either to the immediate vicinity of Sher Shah's capital, Delhi, or at the most to the region where the later **dastur-ul amals** (schedules of revenue rates) were in force, i.e., mainly Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. These are thus not comparable to all-India yields. Moreover, Desai divided the total **jama** of the Empire by the hypothetical land-tax per capita without making any distinction between the **zabt** provinces (for which the various cash-revenue rates had been framed) and the other regions where the tax incidence might have been at a different level altogether. Another assumption of his which requires correction is that the **jama** was equal to the total land revenue whereas, given the purpose for which it was fixed, it could have only been an estimate of the net income from tax-realization by the **jagirdars** to whom the revenue were assigned.

Moreover, the pattern of consumption in Akbar's India was not comparable to that of 1960s because the Mughal Empire was mainly confined to wheat-eating region, and oil-seeds consumption could not possibly be as high in 1595 as in the 1960s.

Shireen Moosvi makes use of the basic method suggested by Desai but modifies his assumption for 1870s to meet the objections raised. She uses the data available for 1860-70 for purposes of comparison and extrapolations; first, working out the population for five provinces of Akbar's India that were under **zabt** and then assuming that the population ratio of these provinces to that of the Empire, and of the latter to the whole of India, have remained constant since 1601, estimates the population of Akbar's Empire at 100 millions and that of India (pre 1947 boundaries) at 145 millions.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the objections raised against Moreland's methodology of the estimation of population of the Mughal Empire.

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- 2) Critically analyse Ashok Desai's methodology to estimate population in Mughal India.
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## 26.3 AVERAGE RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH

Taking the population of India to be around 145 millions in 1601 and 225 millions in 1871—this being the total counted by the first census of 1872 (as modified by Davis to allow fuller territorial coverage), the compound annual rate of growth of the country's population for the period 1601 to 1872 comes to 0.21% per annum. Adopting this rate and given the two population figures for 1601 and 1872, one gets for 1801 a population of some 210 millions. This offers a welcome corroboration of our estimates: the most acceptable estimates for 1801 based on quite different arguments and calculations range from 198 millions to 207 millions.

The rate of population growth during the last three decades of the 19th century (1872-1901) was 0.37 per cent per annum—a rate higher than the one we have deduced for the long period of 1601-1801, but not in itself a very high rate of growth.

### 26.3.1 Comparison with Contemporary Europe

The accompanying Table gives population growth rates (compound) calculated from estimates of European countries drawn from a well-known text book of European economic history.

	1600-1700
Spain and Portugal	0.12
Italy	0.00
France	0.08
British Isles	0.31
Germany	0.00
Switzerland	0.18
Russia	0.12
Total	0.10

These estimates show that compared to the European demographic experience, the Mughal Empire was by no means exceptionally sluggish in raising its population. The rate of 0.21 per cent on the contrary suggests an economy in which there was some room for 'national savings' and net increase in food production, although the growth, on balance, was slow. The slowness must have come from natural calamities like famines as well as man-made factors (of which the heavy revenue demand could have been one). If one had data for estimating populations of some intermediate points, such as the year 1650 and 1700, one could perhaps have worked out the rate of population growth for shorter periods and obtain a closer view of the efficiency of Mughal economy within those periods. Such estimates would have been helpful, too, in indicating whether the rate of population growth in the 18th century (period of the dissolution of the Mughal Empire) signified any different movement in the economy than the one for the 17th century (the classic period of that Empire).

### 26.3.2 Implications of the Rate of Growth

An overall annual rate of growth of 0.2 per cent for the period 1601-1801 suggests some interesting inferences about the Mughal Indian economy. If population growth is regarded as an index of the efficiency of a pre-capitalistic economy, the Mughal economy could not be deemed to have been absolutely static or stagnant for the population tended to grow between 36 and 44% in two hundred years. Davis, on the basis of arguments that have been heavily criticised, believed in a stable population of 125 millions continuing for practically through the two hundred years from 1601 to 1801 thus yielding a zero rate of growth.

## 26.4 COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION : RURAL AND URBAN

There is again no direct data about the proportion of urban population. Ifran Habib has made an attempt to estimate urban population on the basis of the pattern of consumption of agricultural produce. The Mughal ruling class tended to lay claim on one half of the total agricultural produce, but all of it was not taken away from the rural sector. Assuming that about a quarter of the total agricultural produce was reaching towns, and, making allowance for the higher ratio of raw material in the agricultural produce consumed in the towns, he assumes the urban population to be over 15 per cent of the total population.

### Estimated Population in Various Towns

Nizamuddin Ahmad in his *Tabaqat-i Akbari* (c. 1593) records that in Akbar's Empire there were 120 big towns and 3,200 townships. Taking the total population of Akbar's Empire to be nearly 100 millions and the urban population as 15 per cent of it, the average size of these 3,200 towns works out at about 5000 each. However, in the Mughal Empire there were quite a few big towns. The European travellers provide estimated population of some major cities as follows :

Town	Year	Estimate
Agra	1609	500,000
Delhi	1659-66	500,000
Lahore	1581	400,000
Thatta	1631-35	225,000
Ahmedabad	1663	100,000-200,000
Surat	1663	200,000
Patna	1631	200,000
Dacca	1630	200,000
Masulipatam	1672	200,000

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Comment on the rate of growth of population of the Mughal Empire. Does it reflect a stagnation in the Mughal economy?

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- 2) Discuss the pattern of urban population in Mughal India.

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## 26.5 LET US SUM UP

Moreland did the pioneering work in analysing population estimate of Mughal India. He used land:man and civilian: soldier ratios to estimate the then Indian population. But, his methodology carries two major flaws :

- i) during the reign of Akbar measurement was not complete;
- ii) the military: civilian ratio used to analyse the population of the Deccan kingdoms is those of modern states.

Ashok Desai made use of average prices and wages and on that basis he worked out per capita area under various crops during the reign of Akbar and multiplied it with current revenue rates to estimate per capita land revenue and then divided this estimated per capita revenue by the total **Jama** of Akbar's period; this yielded the total population of the Mughal Empire. But his methodology is also questioned by scholars. Shireen Moosvi modified Ashok Desai's methodology to meet the objections raised. She puts the population of Akbar's Empire at 100 millions and that of India at 145 millions. Interestingly, if one compares the growth of the 16th century population of India with other European countries one finds that the growth rate of Indian population was in no way sluggish. Indian economy, thus, was not absolutely static.

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## 26.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub. sec. 26.2.2. Discuss that Moreland has used land : man and civilian : soldier ratios to estimate the population. However, there are major flaws in his methodology. Critically examine them.
- 2) See Sub. sec. 26.2.3. Discuss the methodology adopted by Ashok Desai to estimate the population and mention the objections raised by scholars over his methodology.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub. sec. 26.3.1, 26.3.2. Compare the population of India in the 17th century with the rate of growth of population in European countries. Analyse that the growth rate was in no way stagnant. This was sign of developing economy.
- 2) See Sec. 26.4.

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# UNIT 27 RURAL CLASSES AND LIFE-STYLE

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## Structure

- 27.0 Objectives
- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 Structure of Rural Society
- 27.3 Standard of Living
  - 27.3.1 Clothing
  - 27.3.2 Housing
  - 27.3.3 Food
- 27.4 Social Life
  - 27.4.1 Family Life
  - 27.4.2 Social Institutions and Customs
  - 27.4.3 Festivals and Amusements
- 27.5 Let Us Sum UP
- 27.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 27.0 OBJECTIVES

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India has traditionally been an agricultural country, having most of its population located in the rural areas. Any worthwhile study, therefore, of Indian society has perforce to take into account the life of the rural classes. This Unit will introduce you to the following :

- the groups of population residing in rural areas in the 16th-18th century;
- their life-styles and the standards of living; and
- the customs and social institutions prevalent in rural areas.

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## 27.1 INTRODUCTION

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India is a land of villages. Even today the bulk of its population resides in villages. And what is true today would be even truer for those periods of history when industrial production was small, never going beyond a few scattered artisan and handicraft industries, and agriculture was the major vocation for a very large part of its population. How, then did the Indians live in villages? This is a big question that can itself be split into a number of smaller questions, a few of which could be :

- Was rural India a homogenous group or did several groups together comprise rural society?
- How was production organised in this society? What was the nature of interpersonal relationships?

We shall in the following pages seek to answer these problems with reference to the developments from the 16th to mid-18th century.

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## 27.2 STRUCTURE OF RURAL SOCIETY

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The basic unit of rural society in India, as observed above, was the village. A village had two principal physical features :

It consisted of a group of families and a collection of dwellings and cultivated land also. The system of the ownership of cultivated land in the villages has been described in Unit-17 (Block-5) earlier.

If we say that the primary inhabitants of the village were the peasants, we shall be making an obvious statement. Peasants were one unit of rural population on whose productive efforts rested the survival of all other rural (and indeed also non-rural) classes. But they were divided by the inequalities of wealth and social status. There

were rich (viz. **khwudkasht**, **gharuhala**, and **mirasdar**) and poor peasants (viz. **rezariaya**, **malti** and **kunbi**). There were permanent (**mirasdar**, **thalkar**) and the temporary residents (**paikasht**, **upari**). Caste associations and kinship ties (**bhaichara**) were also sources of divisiveness among the peasantry.

Alongside the peasants, a large population of craft and service communities also resided in the villages. This significant part of the rural population of India consisted of groups like weavers, potters, blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers and washermen. These communities rendered valuable services. They also acted as a cheap source of labour for agricultural work.

Above the peasants there existed a category of rural population which can be described as intermediate proprietors, uniformly known as **zamindars**. They claimed a share in the agricultural produce and exercised control over the village by virtue of a historical tradition. You have read about their rights and privileges in detail in Unit-17 (Block-5). Here it will suffice to note that the **zamindars** as a constituent unit of rural population were recognised by medieval rulers as they assisted the government in the task of collecting revenue from the peasants. For the service so rendered, they were entitled to a percentage of the total revenue collected. As a social group, the **zamindars** were considerably fragmented on the lines of caste associations and social ties.

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## 27.3 STANDARD OF LIVING

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The rural society in medieval India was highly segmented. Thus, one would expect considerable inequalities within the same village. The references in our sources do not highlight these inequalities, and the rural population is generally treated as a monolithic block. We have made an attempt in the following sub-sections to draw as detailed a picture of rural life in medieval India as is permitted by our sources.

### 27.3.1 Clothing

The quantity of clothing is an index of the poverty of rural classes. Menfolk in rural areas have been described by Babur as wearing only a short cloth (**lungi**) about the loins. The travellers testify this description, but add that during the winter men wear cotton-gowns and caps, both made of quilt.

Women have been described as generally wearing cotton **saris**. There was, however, regional variation in their use of the blouse. The Malabari women (and men, too) wore nothing above their waist. In eastern India, too, blouse was not common. But in other regions blouse known as **choli** or **angiya** was worn by rural women. In parts of the western and central India, women wore **lahangas** (skirts) in place of **sari**, with a blouse above.

Wearing of shoes among rural folk was not quite common. Perhaps shoes were used by the richer section in the villages. Satish Chandra uses the works of the Hindi poets, like Surdas and Tulsidas, to mention **panahi** and **upanaha** as the two words in vogue for shoes. (*Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I, p. 460).

### 27.3.2 Housing

A major segment of the rural population lived in houses made of mud with thatched roofs. They were generally single-room 'wellings'.

Pelsaert, who visited India during Jahangir's time, has given a graphic description of the rural housing. We reproduce his account below :

“Their houses are built of mud with thatched roofs. Furniture there is little or none, except some earthenware pots to hold water and for cooking, and two beds, one for the man, the other for his wife : ... Their bedclothes are scanty, merely a sheet, or perhaps two, serving both as under and over-sheet; this is sufficient in the hot weather, but the bitter cold nights are miserable indeed, and they try to keep warm over little cowdung fires which are lit outside the doors, because the houses have no fires-places or chimneys ;...” (Francois Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India* tr. W.H. Moreland & P. Geyl, Delhi, 1925)



There was, however, considerable variation in these houses due to the availability of local material. Thus, the huts in Bengal were made by roping bamboos upon a mud plinth. In Assam, the material used was wood, bamboo and straw. Huts in Kashmir were made of wood, and in north and central India the principal building material was mud thatched with straw. In the South the huts were covered with Cajan leaves. While the poor sometimes shared their dwellings with their cattle, the rich in the rural areas had houses having several rooms, space for storing foodgrains and an enclosed courtyard.

The house of the ordinary peasant was deprived of any furniture save a few cots and bamboo mats. It also did not have any metal utensils barring iron pan used for making breads. The commonly used pots, even for cooking purpose, were made of earth.

### 27.3.3 Food

The diet of the common people in most parts of India consisted mainly of rice, millets and pulses. Pelsaert says, "They know little of the taste of meat." In regions where rice was the major crop, viz., Bengal, Orissa, Sindh, Kashmir and parts of south India, it was the staple diet of the rural masses. Likewise, in Rajasthan and Gujarat millets such as **juwar** and **bajra** were the main food. According to Satish Chandra, wheat was not apparently a part of the diet of the common people, even in the wheat-producing Agra-Delhi region.

In addition to foodgrains, the rural people used beans and vegetables. Fish was popular in the coastal regions of Bengal and Orissa, but was not eaten regularly or in large quantity. There was, however, a taboo on beef. The very poor among the rural population had to remain satisfied with boiled rice, millet and grass-roots only.

There was only one major meal for most of the people in rural areas. It was taken at midday or earlier. At sunset, only a lighter meal was served.

Interestingly **ghi** was apparently a staple part of the diet in Northern India, Bengal and Western India. Bengali poet Mukundarama mentions a few delicacies made of curd, milk and jaggery (**gur**), which the poor could afford only on occasions of marriage and festival. However, **gur** seems to have been commonly consumed in the villages.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Analyse the structure of rural society in Medieval India.

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- 2) Give an assessment of the standard of living prevalent at the rural level in Medieval India.

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## 27.4 SOCIAL LIFE

Social life in rural India is sparsely documented. However, a reconstruction may be attempted on the basis of scattered information gleaned from contemporary literature as also from stray references in the chronicles of the period.

### 27.4.1 Family Life

You are aware of the fact that in India joint family has traditionally been the most important institution of domestic life. For the peasants, the availability of additional lands in a family contributing to the agricultural production had an added economic significance. Some of the broad features of family system may be listed as below :

- In most parts of India, the family system was mainly patriarchal in character.
- The senior male member was the head of the family.
- There was no individual property within the family. Members enjoyed only a right of maintenance from the property.
- Women members were generally subject to the dictates of the males of the family.
- Families gave distinct preference to male over female. Thus a son was preferred to a daughter, and among the sons, preference was given to the first-born.

On the whole, the family system developed the feeling of mutual dependence and joint relationship and thus the consciousness that without each other's help life would be difficult.

### 27.4.2 Social Institutions and Customs

Marriage was the most notable social institution in rural India. The responsibility of marrying sons and daughters vested primarily with the parents. Though there did not exist any fixed limit for the age of marriage, the common practice was in favour of an early marriage. We know on the authority of **Abul Fazl** that Akbar attempted to fix a minimum age for marriage—sixteen years for males and fourteen years for females (**Ain-i Akbari** tr H. Blochman, Vol I, p. 195). But we are not certain about the execution of this order. If references to marriage in contemporary literature are any index, this attempt of Akbar remained confined on paper only. Different customs of marriage were followed among the Muslim and non-Muslim segments of rural population. For instance, marriage among the Hindus was a sacrament as against a contract among the Muslims. However, girls in both cases were unable to exercise their own choice. Similarly, dowry was a bane common to both the segments.

### 27.4.3 Festivals and Amusements

Among the rural folk, a variety of festivals and amusements were popular. Although based on different religions affiliations different kind of festivals were celebrated by the Muslim and non-Muslim population, there is no reason to believe that these two segments of rural population did not participate in each other's festivities.

Most of the festivals of the non-Muslims coincided with particular seasons. Their timing was such that the peasantry was in a state of comparative leisure, and thus in a mood for enjoyment. The most popular of these festivals were **Basant Panchami**, **Holi**, **Deepavali** and **Shivratri**. **Basant** was the time of spring and was celebrated by singing and dancing. **Holi**, a more important festival, was celebrated just before the onset of harvesting season. Huge bonfires, popular songs and scattering of red powder, were the conspicuous features of this festival. **Deepavali** was a festival of lights and was celebrated soon after the harvesting of the **kharif** crops. **Shivratri** was more of a religious festival observed in night-long prayers.

The Muslim festivals, too, by this time (i.e., 16th-18th century), had become influenced by the Indian environment. '**Id**, **Shabbarat** and **Muharram** were the most popular festivals among the Muslims in the rural areas. **Shabbarat**, in the opinion of K.M. Ashraf (**Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan**, 3rd Edition, 1988, New Delhi, p. 241 & n.5), was one festival probably copied from the **Shivratri**. "The distinguishing features of popular celebration", says he, "were the extensive use of fireworks and the illumination of homes and mosques".

As compared with **Shabbarat** and '**Id**, **Muharram** was observed with modesty. The first ten days of **Muharram** were spent in reading the account of the martyrdom of Imam Husain. Later, the **tazias** (imitation of their mausoleums) were taken out in procession and buried in local graveyards.

Dancing and singing were the most popular forms of amusement among the rural masses. Occasions like the festivals of Holi called for gatherings at common places in the villages where popular ballads were sung and folk dances performed.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) Enumerate the broad features of the family system which existed at the village level.

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- 2) What were the major customs, festivals and amusements practised in rural India?

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**27.5 LET US SUM UP**

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In this Unit, the overall constituent structure of rural society has been outlined. The standard of living, viz., food, clothing and housing of the rural classes has been taken into account. Various aspects of social life, viz., family, social institutions and customs, festivals and amusements have also been dealt with.

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**27.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) See Section 27.2
- 2) See Section 27.3 and Sub-Sec. 27.3.1, 27.3.2 and 27.3.3

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) See Section 27.4 and Sub-Sec. 27.4.1
- 2) See Section 27.4 and Sub-Sec. 27.4.2 and 27.4.3

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# UNIT 28 URBANISATION, URBAN CLASSES AND LIFE-STYLE

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## Structure

- 28.0 Objectives
- 28.1 Introduction
- 28.2 Approaches
- 28.3 Urban Landscape
  - 28.3.1 Physical Configuration
  - 28.3.2 Composition of Population (Urban Classes)
  - 28.3.3 Urban Demography
- 28.4 Urban Life
  - 28.4.1 Standard of Living
  - 28.4.2 Social Life
  - 28.4.3 Entertainment and Festivities
- 28.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 28.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 28.0 OBJECTIVES

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The study of urban history of medieval India is an important and equally fascinating subject. After going through this unit you will :

- have an idea of urbanisation in medieval India along with some of the most talked about theories on urbanisation;
- be able to list the general physical characteristics of medieval towns, and
- discuss the various features of medieval urban life in India.

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## 28.1 INTRODUCTION

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The urban history of Mughal India, despite being a subject of great importance, has not received adequate attention by the scholars. That the subject has multifarious facets is evident from the range of topics that possibly from its domain. The expansion of urban centres, their actual size, urban economy and the society that an urban centre seems to have, are some of the notable examples.

In this Unit we propose to introduce you to the urban history of Medieval India. Besides the theoretical generality such as approaches to the problem of urbanisation, we have mainly focussed on the description pertaining to the urban landscape and life. It should be understood here that in this kind of problem-oriented study our approach would mainly be decided by the type of questions we attempt to answer. You would thus find that the details of town life and society as well as their layout given by us have emanated mainly from the way we have tackled the question of urbanisation in Medieval India.

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## 28.2 APPROACHES

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Urbanisation has been seen by scholars both in terms of the physical growth of a town as well as a particular way of life. Of late, much work along both these lines of enquiry has been done in the West. Unlike this, however, the study of urban history in India is still in the developing stage. In the following sub-sections, we offer a brief account of the main theoretical development and the major lines of enquiry followed to date.

The town, in contrast to a village, is now, by consensus, seem to possess two basic features : dense concentration of population within a defined and also limited space, and a predominantly non-cultivating character of this population. A town thus has a definite man-space ratio and an essentially heterogenous occupational pattern.

For the emergence of towns, in medieval India, several explanations have been put forward. The causative factors inherent in these explanations postulate the emergence of mainly four types of urban centres :

- i) administrative
- ii) religious
- iii) military/strategic
- iv) market

The administrative towns obviously functioned primarily as seats of governance. For the Mughal Empire, towns like Delhi and Lahore, come under this category. The religious centres were pre-eminent pilgrim attractions, e.g., Varanasi and Mathura. The military or strategic towns developed essentially as military cantonment, and, in due course of time attracted civilian population also. The towns like Attock and Asirgarh fit this description. Finally, there were urban centres as the focus of largescale commercial activities or were predominantly production centres. Sometimes both these activities together characterised an urban centre. We have, for the Mughal Empire, towns like Patna and Ahmedabad falling under this category.

Here two things should be noted. An average town in the Mughal Empire was in fact an extension of the village in the sense of social unities and attitudes. This rural-urban continuum is thus a notable feature of urbanisation during the Mughal period. Moreover, given the diversity of urban economies in the Mughal Empire, the stereo type of an Indian town would be a misnomer. Thus, the other important thing to note is that the character of two apparently similar cities (at least functionally) would often be different. The emergence of an urban centre, therefore, was dependent on a variety of factors relating to its geographical location and historical situation.

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## 28.3 URBAN LANDSCAPE

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Even while accepting the caveat about Mughal towns as stated in the preceding section, it is possible to identify some common features. We discuss them below :

### 28.3.1 Physical Configuration

Most of the towns had some sort of a fortification wall with one or more gates. The main population of the city lived within these walls. With the expansion of towns at times the cities outgrew their walls. The example of a typical Mughal town can be found in the description of Agra by John Jourdain at the beginning of the 17th century: "The citie is 12 courses long by the river side, which is above 16 miles; and at the narrowest place it is three miles broad. It is walled, but the suburbs are joined to the walls, that were it not for the gates you could not know when you were within the walls or without". Generally, the nobles or princes would build their mansions or gardens outside the gates of the town. Thus, in many cities like Delhi, Agra, Patna, Ahmedabad and Allahabad these settlements developed as suburbs.

In planned towns markets were properly laid. In others shops could be found on both sides of the main roads. With shopkeepers living behind these shops or on the first floor of the shops. Most of the towns could boast of a number of markets. Many of these markets specialised in a particular commodity. Names of various areas suggest their speciality for example in Agra—**Loha Gali** (iron objects), **cheenitole** (sugar mart), **ghallamandi** (grain market), **dal mandi**, **sabunkatra** (soap market) **nil para** (indigo market) in Delhi, **Jauhri bazar** (jewellery), **sabzimandi** (vegetable mart), **churiwala** (bangles), etc. Paharganj was a wholesale market for grain.

The residential areas of towns called **mohalla** were often identified by the professional groups that resided there. A few names like **mahalla kunjrah**, **mochiwara** (shoemakers), **mahalla zargarani** (goldsmiths) **kucha rangrezan** (dyers) are notable instances. Such caste or professional names for different wards of the Mughal towns can be found in almost all the towns. In some cases these **mohallas** or wards were known by the names of influential men who resided there.

Another important feature of the town was the presence of **sarais** which were halting places for merchants or travellers. Even the smallest towns had one. The larger towns like, Delhi, Agra, Patna, Lahore or Ahmedabad had **sarais** by the dozens. Generally,

nobles, royal ladies, big merchants or the state itself took up the job of constructing these **sarais**. The travellers were provided with amenities including storage space to stock merchandise. These were managed by the families of **bhatiyaras** who specialised as keepers of **sarais**. The foreigners visiting the towns were supposed to inform the city administration about their arrival and departure.

On the whole, most of the towns lacked any detailed town planning. Except the major street, other lanes and bylanes were congested and muddy. The city had its own administrative machinery and regulations to run the day-to-day administration.

### 28.3.2 Composition of Population (Urban Classes)

The urban population was not a homogenous one. In our sources we come across various categories of people residing in towns. These can be classified into four broad groups :

- i) Nobles and their retainers, officials of the state and troops;
- ii) Persons engaged in mercantile activities (merchants, sarrafs, brokers, etc.);
- iii) People involved with religious establishments, musicians, painters, poets, physicians, etc., and
- iv) Artisans, menials and workmen of sundry sorts.

The composition of different categories of people in different towns depended on the nature of towns, i.e., administrative centres, or commercial centres., In case of imperial headquarters, perhaps the biggest group was that of the retainers and troops of the king and nobles. Bernier (1658) estimated the total strength of Shah Jahan's great camp around 3-4 lakh.

The situation in other administrative headquarters was also the same. The provincial governors, high nobles and other administrative officers all had their contingents, official hangers-on, servants, slaves and their families.

As most of the big town were commercial centres of importance, the mercantile community of the towns was quite important. At Ahmedabad it was estimated that there were around 84 castes and subcastes of Hindu merchants alone. In 1640 there were 600 brokers in Patna. Our sources mention that in big towns all the roads were lined with shops for miles. The number of grocers in Patna, a moderate town, was around 200. In a comparatively smaller town Jodhpur more than 600 shops were owned by Mahajans.

Another important group in town comprised of people associated with the professions of medicine, learning, literature, art and music. Generally, the religious and charitable grants were given in the vicinity of towns. Besides, a large number of poets, musicians, physicians also made their abode in towns because here money could be earned or patronage of the king and nobles was available.

Artisans, workmen and labourers formed one of the biggest groups in towns having large commercial activities. We have already discussed the large number of crafts practised in India during this period in Unit-22. The people working as artisans in various crafts may be divided in many groups :

- i) The individual artisans working at their own places and selling their wares;
- ii) Artisans working in the **karkhanas** of the kings and nobles, and in largescale building construction undertaken by the kings and nobles. There was a large workforce of semi-skilled and unskilled workmen who would assist artisans or work in such largescale enterprises as shipbuilding, diamond-mining, saltpeter and saltmaking. A number of workmen were employed as domestic help and daily wage labourers.

### 28.3.3 Urban Demography

The **Tabqat-i Akbari** (c 1593) says that during Akbar's period there were around 120 big cities and 3200 **qasbas** (small towns). In the 17th century, with the increasing trade and commerce this number would have grown further. In the absence of records, it is not possible to find out the population of different urban centres. Irfan Habib estimates that around 15 per cent of the total population in Mughal India lived in towns.

As for the size of the individual towns is concerned, scattered references are provided by some European travellers. Sometimes an estimate is provided while at other places the size of Indian towns is compared with European towns. But these figures are available for only a few towns.

For a few important towns we provide the figures below:

Towns	Year of estimate	Population
Agra	1609	5,00,000
	1629-43	6,66,000
	1666	8,00,000
Delhi	1659-66	5,00,000
Lahore	1581 and 1615	4,00,000
		7,00,000
Ahmedabad	1613	1,00,000
		2,00,000
Surat	1663	1,00,000
	1600	2,00,000
Patna	1631	2,00,000
Dacca	c1630	2,00,000

(The figures are taken from Irfan Habib, **Cambridge Economic History of India**, Vol.I, p. 171).

The above estimates show that the big towns in India would have compared favourably with the towns of contemporary Europe.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Discuss the factors that led to the emergence of Medieval towns.

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2) Write a note on **sarais** in fifty words.

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3) Tick mark against the true (✓) and false statements (×)

- i) **Bhatiyaras** were among the chief custodians of the **sarais**,
- ii) The **Tabaqat-i Akbari** mentions that during Akbar's reign there were 120 big cities and 3200 **qasbas**,
- iii) Irfan Habib estimates that 12 per cent of the population resided in the towns in Medieval period.

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**28.4 URBAN LIFE**

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It is an interesting fact that our sources for the study of the Mughal Empire abound with descriptions of urban life. The following sub-sections are thus based on such details

### 28.4.1 Standard of Living

Standard of living in a Medieval city shows striking contrast.

While the upper strata led a life-style akin to the royalty, the urban poor found it difficult to achieve the bare subsistence level. Commenting on the life-style of the common populace at Goa, Linschoten says that they "are so miserable that for a penny they would endure to be whipped and they eat so little that it seemeth they live by the air; they are likewise most of them small and weak of limbs." Similar observation was made by De Laet as well. He comments that "the condition of the common people in those regions is exceedingly miserable; wages are low; workmen get one regular meal a day; the houses are wretched and practically unfurnished, and people have not sufficient covering to keep warm in winter."

The **Ain-i Akbari** and other contemporary European travellers' (Pelsaert, Pietro della Valle, etc.) accounts show that an average monthly wage of the urban workers ranged between Rs. 3 to 4.

Shireen Moosvi has shown that the purchasing power of an unskilled worker was significantly higher in 1595 than in 1867-1871-2. An unskilled worker during Akbar's reign was able to purchase much more wheat, inferior foodgrains, **ghi**, sugar, etc. than his successors did in 1867. Thus, he could have afforded better food-stuff than his counterparts did in the latter half of the 19th century. However, his purchasing power was poor in terms of clothing. The fall in the purchasing power of skilled workers in terms of foodgrains seems even more marked than it was in the case of unskilled wages in the later half of the 19th century. Thus, the urban wages were much higher in c 1600 than in 1867.

Middle classes, specially the petty revenue officials, lower rank **mansabdars** and the physicians appear to be fairly prosperous. However, intellectuals were, in general, poor and depended for their livelihood solely upon their patrons.

The nobles and other upper classes in Mughal India led a luxurious life-style. We are told that an **amir's** son spent 1 **lakh** rupees in a day in Chandni Chowk to buy the necessities. Moreland comments that "spending not hoarding was the dominant feature of the time". Shireen Moosvi has analysed the pattern of consumption of the 'Royalty' and the nobles which clearly reflects the nature of the life-style the 'Royalty' and the Mughal nobles enjoyed :

Head of expenditure	Imperial Household (in per cent)	Noble (in per cent)
Harem	18.68	14.25
Kitchen	7.28	7.04
Wardrobe	8.93	7.32
Building	8.01	6.57
Encampment material	5.53	4.54
Utensils	7.97	6.54
Trappings of animals	1.41	1.16
Books and Paintings	3.60	2.96
Ornaments and Gems	23.65	19.40
Hunting animals and pets	6.94	5.69
Miscellaneous	1.33	1.09
Cash Grants	6.67	—
Foot Retainers	—	8.43
Arsenal and armour	—	9.67
Beasts of Burden	—	2.65
Display animals	—	2.69

This clearly shows that a Mughal noble spent almost 75 per cent on luxury and comforts. The luxurious life-style of the Mughal nobles resulted in their impoverishment. Bernier states that "... Omrahs: on the contrary most of them are deeply in debt; they are ruined by the costly presents made to the king and by their large establishment. "This, in turn, pressed them to extract more from the peasants than the required dues"

However, nobles appear to help, the development of craft production. Shireen Moosvi has calculated that 63.26 per cent of the nobles' salaries were spent to support the craft sector. The average estimated expenditure on craft production amounted to



37.38 per cent of the **jama**. Thus, the investments on craft production was rather large. But, this was more for personal consumption than for the market. Therefore, in spite of large investments it failed to generate a "home-market".

### Clothing

The style of clothing of the middle and upper strata was by and large similar. Both could be distinguished on the basis of the quality of cloth they worn. Men wore drawers (**shalwar**) and breeches (**churidar payjama**), and a shirt. In the winter they also wore **arcabick** (vest stuffed with cotton) and a long loose fitting coat (**qaba**). Besides, they put a shawl on shoulders and a **patka** round the waist and a turban. Humayun is reported to have introduced a new design of overcoat which was cut at the waist and was open in front. He used to wear it over the **qaba**. This coat was also presented as **khi'lat** (robe of honour) to the nobles. Women wore a long **chadar** and a bodice (**choli**). In the **doab** area, **lahanga** (a long loose skirt) and **choli** and a long scarf was quite popular. The Muslim ladies usually wore loose drawers, a shirt and long scarf together with their usual veil.

The cloth used was mostly cotton, plain and printed, and silk, plain and striped.

Akbar paid special attention to his clothing. Abul Fazl mentions that every year 1000 suits were made for him. Akbar is reported to distribute his entire wardrobe among his servants.

Bernier, however, comments that rich merchants had a tendency to look indignant for "lest that they should be used as fill'd sponges." But Barbosa applauds the rich dress style of Muslim merchants of Calicut. Similarly, Della Valle commented on the splendour of Surat merchants. The Hindu nobles followed the Muslim counterparts in their dresses. The Brahmans put **tilaka** on their forehead and Rajput wore earrings.

Lower strata for most part were scantily clothed. Salbanke comments about the common populace between Agra and Lahore that "the Plebeian sort is so poor that the greatest part of them go naked." Similar observations are given by the European travellers for the South. Barbosa remarks about the common masses of the Vijaynagar Empire that they "go quite naked with the exception of a piece of cloth about their middle". Linschoten (1580-1590) mentions that common people of Goa, "live very poorly; go naked" Babur remarks that "peasants and people of low standing go about naked. They tie **lunguta**, a decency cloth, which hangs two spans below the navel ... another cloth is passed between the thighs and made fast behind".

Women also tie on a cloth (**lung**), one half of which goes around the waist, the other is thrown over the head. In winter men wear quilted gowns of cotton ... and quilted caps". In the South most of the people went barefoot.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Compare the standard of living of urban workers with their 19th century counterparts.

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- 2) Discuss the clothing pattern of the urban poor during the Mughal period.

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### 28.4.2 Social Life

Joint family system was common. Woman was subordinate to man. The higher class women observed **purdah**. Barbosa comments that in Khambayat, though, women observed **purdah**, they frequently visited their friends. There was ample freedom of social intercourse within the limits of the **purdah**.

The custom of **jauhar** was almost entirely confined totally among the Rajputs. Their women, in time of despair (during war, etc.), seeing the imminent defeat, to save their pride, used to set themselves afire. Babur gives a vivid description of the **jauhar** performed by Medini Rai's ladies at Chanderi.

Among the upper caste Hindus, the practice of **sati** or self-immolation was quite common. Akbar took a serious view when the daughter of Mota Raja of Marwar was compelled to burn herself against her wishes. Akbar appointed observers in every town and district to ensure that while those who on their own impulse wished to commit **sati** might be allowed to do so, they should prohibit and prevent any forcible **sati**. Akbar also took steps of permitting widows to remarry (1587). Both Hindus and Muslims favoured an early marriage age for boys and girls. Akbar criticised child marriage. He raised the minimum age limit for boys to 16 and for girls to 14 years. Birth ceremony was of great importance. Among the Muslims, the rite of **aqiqa** (shaving the hair of the head) was performed. The Hindu child was placed in the charge of a **guru** at the age of five while, as per Muslim traditions, a child was put in a school (**maktab**) after the completion of four years, four months and four days. The ceremony was known as **bismillah Khwani**. Usually in the 7th year, the Muslim child was circumcised and the occasion was celebrated with great rejoicing. Akbar prohibited circumcising before the age of 12 and even then left it to the option of the grown up boy.

The Hindus performed **upanayana samsakara**, i.e., tying of the tripple sacred thread at the completion of the 9th year.

Marriage ceremonies hardly differed from the present day celebrations. A Hindu marriage began with **tilak** or **mangni**, then a marriage date (**lagan**) was fixed. Songs were sung. Marriage was performed with elaborate rites.

Elaborate ceremonies were performed at the time of death also. Priests chanted **mantras**, distributed alms, etc., put sacred Ganga water followed by **shraddha** ceremony after a year. The practice of burning dead was quite common among the Hindus. Muslims performed **siyum** ceremony on the 3rd day of death.

Nobles and rich merchant spent huge amount of money on marriages. Khemchand, a rich merchant, intended to spend 15 **lakhs** rupees on the marriage of his daughter, but he was robbed on the way. Thirty two **lakhs** rupees were reported to have been spent on the marriage of Prince Dara Shukoh. A 17th century traveller to Sindh, Boccario, reports that even an ordinary Hindu spent 4000-5000 rupees on a marriage. On a marriage in his family, Raja Bhagwan Das provided a number of houses, one hundred elephants and boys and girls of Abyssinia, India and Caucassia, and all sorts of jewell studded golden vessels and utensils, etc.

### Education

In general, education was beyond the reach of a common woman. But women of elite class got opportunity to study. Princesses were taught to read and write. Akbar was greatly interested in female education. Badauni comments that he recommended a new syllabus. He established a school for girls at Fatehpur Sikri. Some royal ladies were also interested in promoting education. Bega Begum, Humayun's consort, founded a "college" near the mausoleum of Humayun. Maham Anaga, the foster mother of Akbar, established a school at Delhi. Gulbadan Begum was well versed in Persian and Turki and wrote the **Humayunama**. She had a library of her own. Similarly, Nur Jahan, Jahan Ara and Zaibunnisa (daughter of Aurangzeb) were literary figures of their age. Aurangzeb educated all his daughters well. But dance and music were frowned upon. Nur Jahan and Jahan Ara (daughter of Shah Jahan) played an active role in Mughal politics. The **mansabdars** were generally well versed in Persian. Some also studied mathematics, knew little bit of medicine and practised calligraphy. In Mughal India, the nobles maintained their personal libraries. Abdul Rahim Khan Khana had a huge library manned by 95 calligraphers, guilders, bookbinders, painters, cutters, illuminators, etc.

Babur himself was a great scholar of Turkish. His autobiography, the **Baburnama**, is still considered one of the masterpieces of Turkish prose. He also knew Persian and was also a skilled calligrapher. Humayun and all other later Mughal Emperors knew good Persian. Though circumstances did not allow Akbar to have formal education, he patronised poets, philosophers, painters, physicians, etc.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss Akbar's attitude towards social evils prevailing in the contemporary society.

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- 2) Write a note on the position of education of the Mughal Princesses.

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### 28.4.3 Entertainment and Festivities

Gambling, elephant fights, **chaupar**, **chandal-mandal**, chess, cards, polo, etc., were the sports greatly indulged in by the higher strata. **Chaupar** playing was very popular among the Hindus, specially the Rajputs. Akbar later substituted human figures for the pieces of **chaupar** and turned it into the amusing game of **chandal-mandal**.

Cards (**ganjifa**) appears to have been first introduced in India by Babur. It became quite popular during Akbar's reign. Gambling was common. Pigeon-flying and cock-fighting were common. Akbar used to feed his own birds and call the game (pigeon flying) by the romantic term **ishqbaazi** (love affair).

Hunting was the most popular pastime of the royalty. The Mughals organised **qamargah** hunts. This was large scale manoeuvre organised in one of the imperial hunting preserves. Sometimes around 50,000 cavalymen and others encircled the hunting preserve and they gradually came closer to a point when the animals were confined into a sort of ring. The Emperor and other big nobles then entered the ring and hunted the animals. Deer, goats, elephants, etc., were also domesticated for the sake of hunting. **Cheetahs** were trained for hunting deer. etc. In many parts of Northern and Central India, imperial hunting preserves had been established. Hunting tigers, lions and elephants was royal prerogative.

Generally, ladies of harem did not participate in outdoor games. But some played **chaugan** (polo). Nur Jahan is the lone example who shot tigers and lions. But pigeon flying, and blind man's buff (**ankhimicholi**) were common pastimes.

#### Festivals and Fairs

Religious festivals and pilgrimages to holy shrines were popular means of amusement. Huge **urs** celebration were organised at the tomb of the **sufis**. At Delhi such celebrations were held at the tombs of Bakhtiyar Kaki and Nizamuddin Auliya. At the tomb of Hazrat Nasiruddin Chiragh Delhi, (Nizamuddin Auliya's successor) on every Sunday, both Hindus and Muslims gathered, specially during the month of **Dipawali**.

'**Id-ul fitr**, '**id-ul zuha**, **nauroz**, **shabbarat**, **holi**, **dasehra**, **dipawali**, **rakshabandhan**, **basant panchami**, etc. were also celebrated with great pomp and show.

Fairs were also organised. The famous Garh Mukteswar fair, still celebrated in the traditional style, can be traced back to the Medieval times. **Dasehra** was popular among the **kshatriyas** and all agricultural classes. The **Kumbha** fairs on the Ganga was most famous of all the fairs. On the occasion of **Muharram**, **taziya** (imitation mausoleums of the martyrs of **karbala**) processions were taken out through the streets of the town.

#### Music

Big **amirs** arranged "**mushairas**" (literary evenings) in their mansions where poets recited their compositions. Singers and musicians performed their recital in the harem every day. Shah Jahan's favourites were Kavindra, Chitra Khan, Lal Khan and

Sriman. Shah Jahan's **amir** Shah Nawaz Khan had a large number of musicians and singers. Muhammad Shah was also fond of music. Boli Khan, Jallah, Chamani and Kamal Bai were the most celebrated ones during his reign. Nia'mat Khan was the **bin** (flute) player and an expert in the **khayal** form of singing. Panna Bai, his disciple, possessed good voice. Taj Khan **Qawali** and Muinuddin, experts in **Qawali**, were other famous singers of Muhammad Shah's reign.

Eunuchs performed dances in public. Miyan Haiga used to dance in the square of the **Urdu Bazar**, in front of the Shahjahanabad fort. A **huge** crowd assembled to watch him. Asa Pura, a Hindu dancing girl was also a great name.

**Alhakhand** and the stories of Nala-Damayanti were recited by the balladeers. **Sravana** songs (**Hindola** and **Sravani**) were quite popular. **Garabha**, the Gujarati dance, was popular on the west coast. Puppet shows, antics of the monkeys, snake-charmer shows, tight-rope walker, etc. were eye-catchers.

Indoor entertainment parties (**Jashn**) were organised which were accompanied with dance and banquet. Humayun introduced the system of river picnics on the Jamuna. He also started the practice of **Mina Bazar** for royal ladies which flourished and developed greatly under his successors.

Drinking was common. Akbar believed that moderate drinking was good for health. Opium eating was also quite common. **Bhang** was another favourite drug.

Prostitution was prevalent. During the 16th century, tobacco smoking was unknown. When in the early 17th century tobacco was introduced, its use became widespread.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Define the following :

**Ishq Bazi** .....

**Chandal-Mandal** .....

**Qamargah Hunts** .....

- 2) Write a note on urs celebrations.

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### 28.5 LET US SUM UP

During the medieval period urban centres and urban life were fairly well developed. In India, urban centres represented the fine blend of urban-rural mix for the obvious reason that most of the towns were extension of village. Urban population was quite heterogenous. On the one hand we find royalty and upper strata leading luxurious life; on the other, the urban poor barely attained the subsistence level. But, interestingly, if one compares the purchasing power of the urban unskilled and skilled workers they look certainly better off in terms of their capacity to buy food stuff compared to their counterparts during the 19th century.

During the Mughal period one finds the continuation of evil customs of **sati**, **purdah**, **jauhar**, child sacrifice, early marriage, etc. However, Akbar introduced certain reforms. He attempted to ban **sati**. Education was not within the reach of most of the women folk. But royal ladies were given some formal education. The Mughal Emperors were also innovative. They introduced new games (cards, etc.) and modified many (chauran, etc). Religious festivals and fairs were organised with society

and pomp as is done today. Origins of many modern fairs can be traced back to the Mughal period.

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## 28.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See sec. 28.2. Analyse the reasons for the emergence of various towns.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 28.3.1.
- 3) i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ✗.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-sec. 28.4.1. Find out whether the Medieval worker was better off.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 28.4.1.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sub-sec. 28.4.2. Discuss Akbar's sensitivity towards the prevailing ills in the Medieval society. He tried to reform evil customs that prevailed amongst the Hindu and the Muslim, social structure.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 28.4.2.

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See Sub-sec. 28.4.3 (Entertainment and Festivities).
- 2) See Sub-sec. 28.4.3 (Festivals and Fairs).

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## UNIT 29 RELIGIOUS IDEAS AND MOVEMENTS

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### Structure

- 29.0 Objectives
- 29.1 Introduction
- 29.2 Bhakti Movement
  - 29.2.1 Ideology
  - 29.2.2 Major Schools
  - 29.2.3 Impact of the Bhakti Movement
- 29.3 Mysticism
  - 29.3.1 Sufi Philosophy
  - 29.3.2 Doctrinal Texts
  - 29.3.3 Major Silsilas
  - 29.3.4 Mahdavi Movement
- 29.4 Islamic Revivalist Movement in the Eighteenth Century
- 29.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 29.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 29.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you will be able to know about :

- the ideology of the Bhakti movement;
- the major schools of the Bhakti movement;
- the impact of the Bhakti movement on society, literature, etc.;
- Islamic mysticism, Sufi philosophy and the major sufi-Silsilas,
- the character and philosophy of the **Mahdavi** movement, and
- the nature of revivalist movements in the 18th century.

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### 29.1 INTRODUCTION

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The religious, milieu of India when Islam reached this subcontinent, presents a phase where Buddhism had lost its supremacy, Brahmanism was trying to consolidate its position by compromising with Buddhist doctrines as well as with pre-Aryan practices. Islam though altogether a new thing, had exercised an influence upon the Indians with its principles of universal brotherhood and human equality. In the words of Tarachand "Not only did Hindu religion, Hindu art, Hindu literature and Hindu Science, absorb Muslim elements, but the very spirit of Hindu culture and the very stuff of Hindu mind were also altered, and the Muslim reciprocated by responding to the change in every development of life". An everlasting process of give and take, thus began. Among the Muslims, Al-Biruni, Amir Khusrau, Abul Fazl, Dara Shikoh, etc., tried to understand Hinduism and made valuable attempts to enhance Muslim understanding of Hinduism by their own works and by translating Sanskrit works into Persian. Rulers like Feroze Shah Tughlaq, Zainul Abidin of Kashmir, Sikandar Lodi, Akbar, Jahangir etc. encouraged this trend with the result that scholars like Mirza Jan Janan rose in the 18th century to declare that both Rama and Krishna were prophets.

During this period one can identify two significant trends in the realm of religion, mainly **Bhakti** and **Sufi**, a detailed discussion on which follows in the subsequent sections.

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### 29.2 BHAKTI MOVEMENT

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In spite of the pantheistic philosophy of Shankaracharya, at the time of the arrival of the Muslims in India, the Hindu society, comprised the followers of Saivism,

vaishnavism and the cult of Shakti. But there were intellectuals who had no faith in the prescribed path of action (**karma marg**), but who regarded the path of knowledge (**gyan marg**) to be the appropriate method for attaining salvation. The disputes between the upholders of these views totally ignored the actual ethical behaviour of man, improvement of his status in life and fulfilment of his destiny on earth. Brahmanism with all its philosophical and ritualistic progress, had thus become an essentially intellectual doctrine. It ignored the personal religious aspirations of the people. The fundamental principles which it taught were impersonal and speculative. The people who were always in need of an ethical and emotional cult in which it was possible to find both satisfaction of the heart and moral guidance, understood nothing of it. It was in these circumstances that the path of **Bhakti**, devotion blended with love of God, found a favourable atmosphere.

### 29.2.1 Ideology

The chief mark of this trend of thought is the relation of the soul with the Supreme Being. The word **Bhakti** in the Pali literature takes its origin back to the 8th century B.C. The **Bhagavadgita**, pre-Buddhist texts and **Chhandogya Upanishad**, contain some references which underline the emergence of devotion to a single personal God. This reaction of the heart against rigid intellectualism is **Bhakti**. So, it is slightly harsh to gulp the suggestion of some scholars like Weber who argue that **Bhakti** was a foreign idea which reached India through Christianity. Scholars like Barth and Senart also maintain that **Bhakti**, in the sense understood in India and the tradition by which it is inspired, belongs to Indian thought. However, this does not mean that in the process of evolution, **Bhakti** did not accept any external influences especially after the arrival of Islam in India. The religious point of view of the Hindus, though always based upon old foundation, became considerably modified.

From the time of the **Bhagavadgita** to the 13th century, the concept of **Bhakti** evolved with a process of compromise between the traditional classical philosophy of the **Upanishads** and the urge for a personal God. The object of the authors of the **Bhagavadgita** was not to contribute a definite philosophy but only to establish a compromise between the different schools of Hindu philosophy. Monotheism and pantheism were clubbed together with the warmth of **Bhakti** in the **Bhagavadgita**.

Thus, up to the 13th century, the period when Islam penetrated into the interior of India, **Bhakti** to a greater extent remained within the folds of Vedic intellectualism. This is evident from the fact that caste division is recognized in the **Bhagavadgita**.

### 29.2.2 Major Schools

The concept of **Bhakti** was defined and analyzed in different ways and under various shades of opinion at many stages. Shankara, a South Indian Shaivite Brahman, gave the doctrine of **Advaita** (allowing no second, i.e., monism) and assiduously preached Upanishad doctrine of salvation through Knowledge. Ramanuja, another South Indian Brahman, though a monist did not accept that God may be exempt from form and qualities. Salvation could be attained through devotion and **Bhakti**. Yoga was the best mystical training. Mutual relationship between the devotee and God was that of a fragment of the totality. **Prapti** (attainment) was the second means of salvation. Ramanuja's God was a personal Being. He argued that as people need God, God too needs people. The individual soul created by God out of his own essence, returns to its maker and lives with Him forever, but it is always distinct. It was one with God, and yet separate. This system of Ramanuja is called **visistadvaita** (qualified monism).

The translation of the **Bhagavata Puran** from Sanskrit into Indian regional languages made the **Bhakti** concept predominant in Hinduism.

The most important movement in the religious history of Medieval India was the creation of a new sect by Ramananda (c. 1360-1470), a disciple of Ramanuja. He had a better idea of the progress of Islam in North India under the Tughlaqs. By travelling all over India, he gathered ideas and made careful observations. He renounced the rigidity of the Hindu ritual and his disciples took the name of **Advadhuta** (the detached) and regarded themselves free from all sorts of religious and social customs. But he was not prepared to go very far from the past. That is why in his **Anand Bhashya** he did not recognize the right of a Sudra to read the Vedas. One, therefore, should not expect social equality from Ramananda. Yet, Raidas and Kabir were among his disciples.

Ramananda's teachings produced two distinct schools of thought among the Hindus: Saguna and Nirguna. To the first belonged the noted Tulsidas who gave literary form to the religious Bhakti. In worshipping Rama as the personal incarnation of the Supreme God, this school raised the popularity of Rama, besides preserving the authority of the Vedas.

Another school was represented by Kabir who preached a religious system strictly monotheistic advocating abolition of **Varnaashrama**, and casting doubt on the authority of the Vedas and other sacred books. The school of Kabir sought to understand Islam and was sufficiently broad minded to incorporate some of its basic principles. That is why his references are available in the Sufi literature as well. In a 17th century account, the *Mirat ul asar*, he is called a **Firdausiya sufi**. The *Dabistan-i Mazahib* places Kabir against the background of the Vaishnavite **vairagis**. Abul Fazl called Kabir a **muwahhid** (monotheist).

On the authority of the **Bijak**, the authoritative account of Kabir's philosophy, it may be said that he never thought of founding a religion as happened after his death. He simply wished to give an effect of fullness to the reconciling trend introduced by way of Bhakti and welcomed all who were willing to join him. Belief in a Supreme Being is the foundation of his preaching. He believed that salvation is possible not by knowledge or action but by devotion (Bhakti). He neither favoured Hindus nor Muslims, but admired all that was good in them.

### Sikhism

The teachings and philosophy of Guru Nanak constitute an important component of Indian philosophy and thought. His philosophy comprised three basic elements: a leading charismatic personality (the **Guru**), ideology (**Shabad**) and organisation (**Sangat**). Nanak evaluated and criticised the prevailing religious beliefs and attempted to establish a true religion which could lead to salvation. He repudiated idol worship and did not favour pilgrimage nor accepted the theory of incarnation. He condemned formalism and ritualism. He believed in the unity of God and laid emphasis on having a true Guru for revelation. He advised people to follow the principles of conduct and worship: **sach** (truth), **halal** (lawful earning), **Khair** (wishing well of others), **niyat** (right intention) and service of the lord. Nanak denounced the caste system and the inequality which it perpetrated. He said that caste and honour should be judged by the acts or deeds of the individuals. He believed in Universal brotherhood of man and equality of men and women. He championed the cause of women's emancipation and condemned the **sati pratha**. Nanak did not propound celibacy or vegetarianism. He laid stress on concepts like justice, righteousness and liberty. Nanak's verses mainly consist of two basic concepts: (i) **Sach** (truth) and **Nam** (Name). **Sabad** (the word), **Guru** (the divine precept) and **Hukam** (the divine order) form the basis of divine self-expression. He laid emphasis on **kirtan** and **satsang**. He introduced community lunch (**langar**). Tarachand regards the influence of **sufis** upon the religious thought of Nanak of fundamental importance. The similarity of thought in the verses of Nanak and Baba Farid consisted of the following : the sincere devotion and surrender before one God. But at the same time Nanak did not hesitate in criticising the **sufis** for leading a luxurious life. Nanak made an attempt to unify the Hindus and Muslims and certainly succeeded in synthesizing within his own teachings the essential concepts of Hinduism and Islam. The religious book of the Sikhs the **Guru Granth Sahib** was compiled by Guru Arjan. After the death of the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh the divine spirit did not pass on to another Guru but remained in the Granth and the community of the **Guru's** followers.

The **Gurus** mostly belonged to the Khatri mercantile caste whereas their followers were mostly rural Jats. It was Guru Gobind Singh who inaugurated the **Khalsa** (brotherhood) among the Sikhs. The Khatri and Aroras as well as Jats constituted important groups within the Sikh community. The artisan castes known as Ramgarhia Sikhs and converts to Sikhism from scheduled castes represented other groups within the Sikh **panth**. Caste consciousness did exist in the Sikh **panth** but was not so prominent.

Dadu (c. 1544-1603) was also inspired by Kabir's doctrine. In his **Bani**, a collection of his hymns and poems, he regards Allah, Ram and Govind as his spiritual teachers.

Dadu's cosmology and the stages of the soul's pilgrimage carry **sufi** influence. In the 18th century, with the decline of the Mughal Empire, the **Dadu Panth** got transformed into Nagas or professional fighters.



**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Identify the two major schools of the Bhakti movement.

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2) Discuss briefly the ideology of the Bhakti movement.

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3) What were the chief tenets of Sikhism?

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**Maratha Vaishnavism**

The Maratha school of Vaishnavism or the **Bhagavata Dharma** has a long history. By the close of the 13th century, steady enrichment and vigour was imparted to the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra by a number of poet-saints. The most outstanding of these was Gyaneshwara a Brahmin who is considered to be the greatest exponent of the Maratha Vaishnavism. He wrote a Marathi commentary on the **Bhagavadgita** called **Bhavartha Dipika** or **Jnanesvari**. The main centre of the movement started by him was Pandarpur. The shrine of Vithoba of Pandarpur later became the mainstay of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra. The Krishna Bhakti movement of Pandarpur was intimately linked to a temple and a deity, but it was not idolatrous in nature. Vithoba was more than a simple deity: its importance lay in its symbolism.

The main features of the Vaishnava religious devotion—anti-ritualism and anti-casteism in Maharashtra—were similar to those of other non-conformist movements in the North.

The poet-saints tried to bring religion to the lowest strata of the society. By interpreting the **Bhagavadgita** in melodious Marathi tunes, Gyaneshwar laid the basis of the **Bhagavata Dharma** in Maharashtra by giving a fillip to the Varkari sect which had initiated and instituted regular popular pilgrimage to the shrine of Vithoba (the form of the great God Vishnu) at Pandarpur. Vithoba was the god of the Varkari sect. Its followers were householders who performed pilgrimage twice a year to the temple. Its membership cut across caste boundaries. The movement in Maharashtra witnessed mass participation by different social groups such as sudras, Atisudras, Kumbhera (potter) mali, mahar (outcaste) and **Alute balutedars**. Some of the saints belonging to lower strata of society were Harijan Saint Choka, Gora **Kumbhar**, Narahari **Sonara**, Banka **Mahara**, etc.

In the post-Gyaneshwar period, Namdeva (a tailor by caste), Tukaram, and Ramdas, were important Marathi saints. Eknath (a Brahman) furthered the tradition laid down by Gyaneshwar. Tukaram and Ramdas (Shivaji's teacher) also raised anti-caste and anti-ritual slogans. Eknath's teachings were in vernacular Marathi. He shifted the emphasis of Marathi literature from spiritual text to narrative compositions. Tukaram's teachings are in the form of Avangas or verses (**dohas**) which constitute

the **Gatha**. It is an important source for the study of the Maratha Vaishnavism. The Varkari Maratha saints developed a new method of religious instruction, i.e. **Kirtan** and the **Nirupana**. The Maratha movement contributed to the flowering of Marathi literature. These saints used popular dialect which paved the way for transformation of Marathi into a literary language. The literature of the Varkari school gives us some idea about the plebeian character of the movement. It addressed itself to the problems of the Kunbis (farmers), Vanis (traders) and the artisans, etc. M.G. Ranade points out that this movement led to the development of vernacular literature and upliftment of lower castes, etc.

### **Gaudia Vaishnavism**

The Gaudia Vaishnav movement and the Chaitanya movement (neo-Vaishnav movement) which derived its inspiration from the life and teachings of Chaitanya had a tremendous impact on the social, religious and cultural life of the people of Assam, Bengal and Orissa. The people were not only influenced by his message but began to regard him as an incarnation of God. Let us survey the social and religious conditions in the pre-Chaitanya Bengal and Orissa. The social structure was based on Varnashrama. The Sudras and the lower castes suffered from various disabilities. Among the religious systems the **Sakta-tantric** creed predominated. The medieval Bhakti in Bengal was influenced by two streams—Vaishnav and non-Vaishnava (Buddhism and Hinduism). Jayadeva's **Gita Govinda** written during the time of the Palas provided an erotic-mysticism to the love of Radha and Krishna. Buddhism was also on the decline and this decadent form of Buddhism influenced Vaishnavism which in turn affected the Bengali Bhakti movement. The emphasis was on eroticism, female form and sensuousness. In the pre-Chaitanya Bengal and Orissa, oppression of lower castes by the Brahmins was rampant. Moral decadence was the order of the day. Chandidas, a Bhakti poet, was influenced by **Gita Govinda** and Sahajiya doctrines (Buddhism). It was in the midst of social and religious conservatism and moral decadence that the Chaitanya movement dawned and brought far-reaching changes. Chaitanya, the founder of the movement, himself remained free from all sorts of social and religious conservatism. It was basically not a social reform movement, though it rejected caste barriers. Although a Brahmin, Chaitanya had no respect for the idea of the superiority of Brahmins. He openly violated caste rules and used to mix up with the members of the low occupational castes. Vrindavan Das the author of the **Chaitanya Bhagavat** mentions how he socialised with the lower castes. He discarded the symbols of Brahminism. The Neo-Vaishnavite movement found its adherents in such disparate social groups—untouchables to scholars.

The influence of Bhakti doctrine made Mira a distinguished poet and a symbol of love and attachment to Lord Krishna. In her poem called **Padavali**, she speaks of herself as a Virgin and her fervent devotion to Lord Krishna seems to have made her totally indifferent to worldly life. Mira advocates image-worship and the observance of special fasts.

### **29.2.3 Impact of the Bhakti Movement**

The doctrine of Bhakti helped the uplift of the contemporary society in many ways. The Indo-Aryan dialects such as Bhojpuri, Magadhi and Maithili of modern Bihar, Avadhi of Avadh region, Braj Bhasha of Mathura region and Rajasthani, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Sindhi and Gujarati, also assumed new forms and meaning through Bhakti poetry. Notable progress in Tamil and Marathi literature during medieval times, was made through the writings of famous saints of the Bhakti order. The hymns, ballads, legends and dramas centring around Chaitanya's interpretation of Krishna, made valuable contribution to the Bengali literature. (See Unit-31).

Besides literature, the Bhakti doctrine and its practice by the saints of this order, had an impact upon socio-religious concepts which prepared the ground for improved social conditions in medieval times. It is true that the Bhakti Cult was essentially indigenous, but it received a great impetus from the presence of Muslims in this country. It not only prepared a meeting ground for the devout men of both creeds, it also preached human equality and openly condemned ritualism and casteism. It was radically new, basically different from the old traditions and ideas of religious authorities. It sought to refashion the collective life on a new basis. It cherished the dream of a society based on justice and equality in which men of all creeds would be able to develop their full moral and spiritual stature.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) What was the impact of the Bhakti movement on contemporary society and literature?

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2) What were the main features of the Maratha Vaishnavism?

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3) Discuss the background against which the Gaudia Vaishnav movement developed. What were its chief characteristics?

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**29.3 MYSTICISM**

Mysticism is an offshoot of religion. All Islamic religious movements arose out of controversies about God's attributes and decrees and their impact on the universe. Religious and spiritual movements in Islam contain an element of political implication. Various founders of religious movements, therefore, sought state support to strengthen their ideologies. There had been from the very early days a close combat between the upholders of **Ilm ul-kalam** (the science of defending orthodoxy by rational arguments) and the philosophers, who absorbed a lot from the Greek philosophy and laid more emphasis upon the identification of the **Being**. The orthodox theologians in spite of all their efforts neither could stop studies in philosophy nor could persuade the rulers to abstain from extending patronage to the philosophers. Sufi doctrine was the third element which presented yet another viewpoint of Islamic philosophy.

**29.3.1 Sufi Philosophy**

Unlike the philosophers who were trying to rationalize the nature of the Necessary Being, and the scholars of **Kalam** who were mainly concerned with the defence of the divine transcendence (i.e., God is above His creation and not one with it), Sufism sought to achieve the inner realization of divine unity by arousing intuitive and spiritual faculties. Rejecting rational arguments, the Sufis advocated contemplation and meditation.

According to the analysis of Shah Waliullah, an eighteenth century scholar of India, Sufism finds justification in the esoteric aspects of Islam, which involves the purification of the heart through ethical regeneration. This aspect is defined in the Islamic doctrine: that Allah should be worshipped with the certainty that the worshipper is watching Allah or He is watching the worshipper.

Sufism is divided into four phases. The first began with the Prophet Muhammad and his companions and extended to the time of Junaid of Baghdad (d. 910). The Sufis

during this period exclusively devoted themselves to prayer (**namaz**), fasting (**rozah**) and invoking God's names (**zikr**). During Junaid's time, the Sufis lived in a state of continued meditation and contemplation. This resulted in extensive spiritual experiences which could be explained only symbolically or in unusual phrases. Emotional effect of **sama** (religious music) upon the Sufis increased during this phase. The practice of self-mortification was started by the Sufis in order to save themselves from material desires. Many lived in mountains and jungles far away from the shadow of the devil believed to be resting within the folds of worldly settlements.

With Shaikh Abu Said bin Abul Khair (d. 1049) began the third phase. Now the emphasis was laid upon the state of ecstasy which led to spiritual telepathy. In contemplating the union of temporal and eternal, their individuality dissolved and the Sufis even ignored their regular prayers and fasting, etc.

In the fourth phase, the Sufis discovered the theory of the five stages of the descent from Necessary Being (**wajib-ul-wujud**). It is from here that the problem of **Wahdat-ul-wujud** began.

The man who played an important and decisive role in the history of Sufism was an Irani, Bayazid Bustani (d. 874 or 877-78). He evolved the concept of **fana** (annihilation). It implies that human attributes are annihilated through union with God, a state in which the mystic finds eternal life (**baga**).

Bayazid's line of thought was further developed by Husain Ibn Mansur Al-Hallaj, a disciple of Junaid. His mystical formula **ana-al Haq** (I am the Truth or God) became an important factor in the evolution of the mystical ideas in Persia and then in India. Many **silsilas** were formulated and the practice of deputing disciples to distant lands began. This tendency increased in the Third phase and some eminent Sufis also moved to India. Shaikh Safiuddin Gaziruni and Abul Hasan Ali bin Usmani-al-Hujwari were among the noted immigrants.

### 29.3.2 Doctrinal Texts

The Sufi doctrines in India are based upon some well known works such as the **Kashf-ul-Mahjub** of Hujwiri, which gives biographical details and other aspects of their thought from the days of Prophet. Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi's **Awarif-ul Maarif** is the second such work. Both of them accepted the superiority of the **Sharia** (Islamic Code). They argued that Sufis must obey the **Sharia**. To them **Sharia**, **Marifat** (gnosis) and **Haqlqat** (reality) were interdependent.

### 29.3.3 Major Silsilas

By the 13th century, the division of the Sufis into fourteen orders (**Silsilas**) had already crystallized. Some disciples of Shaikh Shihabuddin migrated to India, but Shaikh Bahauddin Zakaria was the real founder of the **Suhrawardi** order in India. He associated himself with the court and in 1228 Iltutmish appointed him the **Shaikh-ul Islam**. The saints of the Suhrawardi order hereafter remained in touch with the establishment and actively participated in political activities. Shaikh Ruknuddin was another saint of this order greatly venerated by the Sultans of Delhi. According to him, a Sufi should possess three attributes. Property (to satisfy the Qalandar's physical demand), knowledge (to discuss scholarly questions with the Ulema) and **Hal** (mystical enlightenment) to impres other Sufis. After his death (1334-35), the Suhrawardi order made progress in provinces other than Multan and spread from Uch to Gujarat, Punjab, Kashmir and even Delhi. Under Firoz Shah Tughlaq, this order was revitalized by Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari. He was a very staunch and puritan Muslim and objected to the growing Hindu influence on the Muslim social and religious practices. Other saints of this order like Qutab-Alam and Shah-Alam, exercised tremendous influence upon the political personalities of their time.

Side by side in the 14th century, there developed another order called **Firdausiya**. Shaikh Sharfuddin Ahmad Yahya was the leading saint of this time. He was an ardent believer in **Wahdat-ul Wujud**.

The order which retained its popularity among the people and contributed in strengthening the cause of Sufism in India, was the **Chishti Silsilah**. Founded by Khwaja Chishti (d. 966) it was introduced into India by Khwaja Muinuddin, the disciple of Khwaja Usman Haruni. Unfortunately, we have no authentic record of his life and career. Whatever has reached us is based upon legends compiled as a token

of devotion to the saint. Born in Seistan in 1143, he reached India a little before the invasion of Muhammad Ghori. On the advice of his guide, he reached India in 1190 and consequently settled at Ajmer. He is said to have died in 1234.

The sayings of Muinuddin show that his life's mission was to inculcate piety, humility and devotion to God. According to him, those who know God avoid mixing with other people and keep silent on matters relating to divine knowledge. After his death, the **silsilah** made notable progress under his able disciples.

The Chishti mystics believed in the spiritual value of music. The disciple of Muinuddin, Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki died in a state of ecstasy under the spell of music. He stayed at Delhi and exercised tremendous influence upon the people.

Khwaja Fariduddin Masud was the **Khalifa** (successor) of Qutubuddin. He kept himself far away from political personalities and avoided contact with rich and powerful people. He advised his disciple Syedi Maula: "Do not make friends with kings and nobles. Consider their visits to your home as fatal (for your spirit). Every **darwesh** who makes friends with kings and nobles, will end badly." Almost the same was his message to his Chief disciple Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya i.e., he emphasised dissociation with kings. Baba Farid died at the age of 93 in 1265.

Shaikh Nizamuddin was his Chief disciple. Though he saw the reigns of seven Sultans of Delhi, he never visited the court of any one of them. The liberal outlook of the Shaikh as well as his delight in music caused him to be denounced by the orthodox Ulema. Even after his death in 1325, the Shaikh commanded tremendous respect, and even now he is regarded to be a great spiritual force. He inspired men with the love of God and helped them to get rid of their attachment to worldly affairs. Stress on the motive of love which leads to the realization of God, was the main feature of his teachings. He preached that without the love of humanity, love of God will be incomplete. He stated that social justice and benevolence are parts of Islam.

The message of love imparted by Shaikh Nizamuddin was carried to different parts of the country by his disciples. Shaikh Sirajuddin Usmani took the message to Bengal. He was succeeded by Shaikh-Alaudin Ala-ul Haq who continued the work of his master in the eastern parts of India. Shaikh Burhanuddin, another disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin, settled at Daultabad and his message was preached there by his disciple, Shaikh Zainuddin. In Gujarat Shaikh Syed Hussain, Shaikh Husamuddin and Shah Brakatullah, spread the message of equality and humanitarianism. They were exponents of the doctrine of the inner light and the theology of the heart.

It is to be noted that the Muslim mystics, in spite of their speculative leanings, did not lose touch with the realities of life. They were not prepared to give up the socio-moral aspects of life in the interest of spiritual exaltation and ecstasy. That is why they demanded justice and benevolence. In the Quranic teachings also, prayer is correlated with charity towards fellowmen, the implication being that without the latter the former would be incomplete and ineffective. Whenever there was any deviation from this injunction, some of them boldly criticized the authorities. That is one of the reasons why they were not keen to be the beneficiaries of the state as it would have compromised their independence of mind and action. The Music party (**sama**) of the Sufis was justified by pointing out that a Sufi is a lover of God and, as such he stands in a different relation to God from others who are merely 'abd' or slaves. As music inflames the fire of love and helps in creating the supreme state of ecstasy, it was permissible.

After the death of Baba Farid, the Chishti order was divided into two main subdivisions—**Nezamia** and **Sabiria**. The latter was founded by Makhdum Alauddin Ali Sabri who isolated himself from the world and lived the life of a recluse.

Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi (d. 1537) was a mystic of the Sabiria order. He was an exponent of the doctrine of the "Unity of Being" (**Wahdat-ul Wujud**), a concept which had become very popular in India among the masses as well as the intelligentsia.

Now we turn to the contribution of other important Silsilahs like the Qadiri and Naqshbandi.

The founder of the Qadiri order was Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani of Baghdad (d. 1166). This order played an important role in the spread of Islam in Western Africa and

Central Asia. In India, it was introduced by Shah Niamatullah and Makhdum Mohammad Jilani towards the middle of the 15th century. Shaikh Musa, a member of this family, had joined Akbar's service but his brother Shaikh Abdul Qadir did not associate himself with the government.

The **Qadiri** order found a great devotee in Prince Dara Shukoh who visited a saint of this order, Miyan Mir (1550-1635), at Lahore along with Shah Jahan and was much impressed by his saintly personality. After the Shaikh's death, Dara became the disciple of his successor, Mulla Shah Badakhshi. The influence of the **Wahdat-ul Wujud** concept is evident in the mystic works of the prince, namely the **Safinat-ul Auliya**, **Sakinat-ul Auliya**, **Risala-i-Haq Numa**, **Majma-ul Bahrain**, etc.

During Akbar's period the Chishti order again rose to prominence, precisely due to the Emperor's devotion to Salim Chishti of Fatehpur. Bairam Khan, a prominent figure of this time, kept Aziz Chishti in high esteem.

In the 18th century, Shaikh Kalimullah of Delhi and his disciple Shaikh Nizamuddin Chishti emerged as prominent personalities of the time.

The **Naqshbandi** order was introduced into India by Khwaja Baqi Billah (1563-1603), the seventh in succession to Khawaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi (1317-1389), the founder of this order. From the beginning, the mystics of this order laid stress upon observance of the law (**Shariat**) and had emphatically denounced all **biddat** (innovations) which had spoiled the purity of Islam. Thus, it may be regarded as a reaction to the challenging ideas of the upholders of **Wahdat-ul Wujud**. This doctrine was furiously attacked by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the chief disciple of Khwaja Baqi Billah. He wrote and circulated that God who created the world could not be identified with his creatures. Rejecting, **Wahdat-ul Wujud**, he expounded the doctrine of **Wahdat-ul Shuhud** ("apparentism") to serve as a corrective to the prevailing tendency. According to him, the "unity of Being" is not an objective but subjective experience. It appears to the mystic that he is identified with God, but in reality it is not so. In his rapturous ecstasy he gets lost in the object of his love and adoration and begins to feel as if his self was completely annihilated. But this is a temporary feeling and the mystic comes back to the stage of **Abdiyati** (servitude). The Shaikh maintained that the relation between man and God is that of slave and master or that of a worshipper and the worshipped. It is not the relation of lover and beloved as the Sufis generally hold. He emphasized the individual's unique relation of faith and responsibility to God as his Creator. It is the obedience to the Divine will which establishes the right relation between the human will in its fitness and the World Order ruled by God. Only through the **Shariat** one can realize the mystery of the Divine Existence. Thus Shaikh Ahmad tried to harmonize the doctrines of mysticism with the teachings of Orthodox Islam. That is why he is called **Mujaddid** (the renovator) of Islam. Aurangzeb was the disciple of Khwaja Mohammad Masum, the son of the **Mujaddid**.

Shah Waliullah (1702-1762) was a noted scholar and a saint of the Naqshbandi order. He tried to reconcile the two doctrines of **Wahdat-ul Wujud** and **Wahdat-ul Shuhud**, his contention being that there is no fundamental difference between the two theories. He pointed out that in both these views the real existence belongs to God and that he alone has actual independent existence. The existence of the world is not real, and yet it can not be called imaginary either. To maintain that there is one reality which manifests itself in an infinity of forms and pluralities is the same as to hold that contingent beings are the reflection of the names and attributes of the necessary being. If at all there is any difference between the two positions, it is insignificant.

Khwaja Mir Dard, the famous Urdu poet, was another mystic of the **Naqshbandi** order and a contemporary of Shah Waliullah. He also criticised **Wahdat-ul Wujud** in the light of his inner experience. According to him, this doctrine was expounded by the Sufis in a state of ecstatic intoxication. So to give expression to such thoughts was highly injudicious. He condemned the believers in **Wahdat-ul Wujud** as those who have no knowledge of Reality. He was of the view that only through slavery to God one can attain closeness to Him.

which deterioration set in but even in the 18th century some of these **Khanqahs** were the centres of spiritual culture. Khwaja Mir Dard's **Khanqah** was one such important centre, which was often visited by Emperor Shah Alam.

**Check Your Progress 3**

1) What were the main tenets of the Sufi philosophy?

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2) Enumerate the major Sufi silsilas.

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**29.3.4 Mahdavi Movement**

The hope of the advent of a deliverer goes back to the traditions of Prophet Muhammad or his companions. The first person to lay claim to being a deliverer (a Mahdi)—in the history of Islam was Muhammad al Harafia, a son of Ali. Many Mahdis came after him who were mainly concerned with the economic and political movements. Syed Mohammad of Jaunpur was the only Mahdi who did not crave political power but was mainly interested in spiritualism and purifying Islam.

He proclaimed himself Mahdi at Mecca. On returning to India, he was heckled by the **ulema** who were antagonistic towards him. However, he did manage to win a few converts some of whom belonged to the **ulema** group. The Mahdis enjoined worship of God according to the strict laws of **Shariat**: God, His Prophet and His Book were the only guides. The Mahdavis lived in **Daeras** where they practised the laws of the **Shariat**. For the Mahdavis the ordinance of the Quran was divided into two groups: commandments explained by the last of the Prophets associated with the **Shariat** and commandments of the last of the **walis**, i.e., Mahdi. The latter comprised the following:

Renunciation of the world, company of the truthful, seclusion from mankind, resignation to the Divine will, quest of the vision of God, distribution of one tenth of the income, constant **Zikr** and migration (hijrat). The **Mahdavis** abjured politics. After the death of Syed Muhammad of Jaunpur, several **Daeras** sprang up to disseminate the teachings of Mahdi. The preachers in these **Daeras** were called **Khalifas**. They used local dialect for preaching. The **Daeras** attracted the masses because of the piety and simplicity of the **Mahdavis**. They were established in the North as well as South i.e. Gujarat, Chandigarh, Ahmednagar, Bayana, etc..

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**29.4 ISLAMIC REVIVALIST MOVEMENT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

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The Mughal Empire declined rapidly after the death of Aurangzeb. The Hindu groups such as the Marathas, Jats and Sikhs posed a serious threat to the Muslim power. Against this backdrop, Islamic revivalist movement which was religio-political in nature developed and found expression in the writings of Shah Waliullah (1703-62). He was basically a theologian who laid stress on fundamentalism and rejected innovations in Islam. The Shah considered himself a reformer of the Muslim society. He aimed to revert back to the Prophetic traditions. His religious and political thought influenced a group of religious reformers called **Mujahidin** (holy warriors). In the post-Mutiny era, his religious thought influenced the various schools of Islamic

revivalism: the modernism of Sayyid Ahmed Khan and the Aligarh Movement, the traditionalist theologians of the Deoband school and the neo-traditional **ahl hadith** (followers of Muhammad's traditions).

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) What were the chief characteristics of the Mahdavi movement?

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- 2) Discuss the nature of Islamic revivalist movement in the 18th century.

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**29.5 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit we have read how the Bhakti movement developed in India. Its ideology, the major schools of thought and its impact on the social and literary spheres has been taken into account. The chief characteristics of Islamic mysticism have been outlined. The nature of the Sufi philosophy, its major **silsilahs** and doctrinal texts as well as the nature of the Mahdavi movement have been highlighted. Finally, the unit deals with nature of the Islamic revivalist movement in the 18th century.

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**29.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) See Section 29.2 and Sub-sec. 29.2.3
- 2) See Section 29.2 and Sub-sec. 29.2.2
- 3) See Section 29.2 and Sub-sec. 29.2.3

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) See Section 29.2 and Sub-sec. 29.2.4
- 2) See Section 29.2 and Sub-sec. 29.2.2
- 3) See Section 29.2 and Sub-sec. 29.2.3

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) See Section 29.3 and Sub-sec. 29.3.1
- 2) See Section 29.3 and Sub-sec. 29.3.3

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) See Section 29.3 and Sub-sec. 29.3.4
- 2) See Section 29.4



# UNIT 30 STATE AND RELIGION

## Structure

- 30.0 Objectives
- 30.1 Introduction
- 30.2 Historical Perspective
  - 30.2.1 Contemporary Scenario
  - 30.2.2 Contemporary Historiography
  - 30.2.3 Modern Historiography
- 30.3 Attitude of the Mughals Towards Religion
  - 30.3.1 Akbar
  - 30.3.2 Jahangir
  - 30.3.3 Shah Jahan
  - 30.3.4 Aurangzeb
- 30.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 30.6 Key Words
- 30.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

## 30.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will know about the :

- nature of the contemporary writings on religion;
- observations of some historians on the religious policy of the Mughal Emperors;
- attitude of the Mughal Emperors towards religion, and
- influence of the Emperor's religious faith on his state policy.

## 30.1 INTRODUCTION

The change in the composition of the upper ruling classes in North India after the Muslim conquests should be regarded as a watershed in Indian history. The most important political reason for demarcation from the preceding period is the bare fact that now the Muslims emerge as the dominant factor in the Indian polity—a process that continued for many centuries including the Mughal rule. This has naturally affected the periodization of Indian history. Some modern scholars are prone to call medieval period “as” Muslim period: They think that since Muslims were the rulers, Islam must have been the state religion. But this perception is erroneous, because it places exclusive importance on religion of the upper ruling classes, completely disregarding other significant components of medieval society like economic, political and social interests. Secondly, it is not rational to equate the religion of the ruler with that of the state. Such perceptions complicate the issue of state and religion.

In this Unit, at first, we will discuss the background in which the Mughal state was working. We shall also take note of the observations of contemporary sources. The attitude of the Mughal Emperors towards religious matters will also be examined. This includes the personal beliefs of the ruler, state policies and relationship with the non-Muslims. We have avoided the question of Mughal-Rajput relations as they have been discussed in detail in Unit 11.

We would like to stress here that one should be on his guard while using modern terminology to evaluate medieval Indian history, especially the issue of religion during this period. The terms like “fundamentalism”, “fanaticism”, “communalism” “secularism”, etc. are thrown in wide circulation and are being freely used. Many times this leads to distortion of facts. For a better understanding of such issues, therefore, we should follow a disciplined historical perspective and carefully observe some characteristic features of medieval period.

## 30.2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this section we will discuss the attitude of the State and people towards religion. How the contemporary and modern historiographers view this delicate question of State and religion is also dealt with.

### 30.2.1 Contemporary Scenario

One feature of the period under study was the firm belief of the majority of the people in religion. Every educated person was expected to be well-versed in religious studies. Consequently, chronicles, etc. written during the period either by Hindus or Muslims were couched in religious idiom. A careless handling of this material, therefore, could blur our judgement of facts, leading to unwarranted interpretation.

Secondly, recognising the importance of religion in public life, the temporal heads freely used it in their personal and political interest. The rulers like Mahmud of Ghazni often gave the slogan of 'jihad' (religious war) against their enemies, even though none of them really fought for the faith. "We can hardly find an example of a war," remarks P. Saran, "which was fought by Muslim rulers purely on a religious basis and for a religious cause".

Thirdly, the 'ulema' (Muslim theologians) were held in high esteem. They wanted the rulers to follow Islamic code in their administration and treat the non-Muslims accordingly. But as P. Saran writes, "The philosophy of the treatment of non-Muslims, chiefly idolators, by Muslims as developed by Muslim theologians, was nothing different in its nature from the philosophy of the Brahmanic theologians which allowed them, in the sacred name of religion, to treat with all manner of contempt, humiliation and disgrace, a very large section of their countrymen whom they condemned as untouchables..."

On the other hand, some Muslim rulers in India often disagreed with the orthodox **ulema** on certain occasions relating to administrative matters. In most cases, they did not accept the verdict of the religious groups if it did not suit their policies. For example, 14th century chronicler Ziauddin Barani describes at length the attitude of Alauddin Khalji thus :

"He came to the conclusion that polity and government are one thing and the rules and decrees of Law (**shariat**) are another. Royal commands belong to the king, legal decrees rest upon the judgement of **qazis** and **muftis**. In accordance with this opinion whatever affair of state came before him, he only looked to the public good, without considering whether his mode of dealing with it was lawful or unlawful." The **qazi** of the Sultan, Mughisuddin of Bayana, suggested a very harsh and humiliating attitude towards the non-Muslim subjects; but Alauddin rejected the advice and told the **qazi**, that the interest of his government and his people were of prime importance. He, therefore, issued orders and formulated policies almost disregarding the orthodox opinion. Alauddin's attitude towards religious orthodoxy and political affairs, in fact, became a precedent: administrative requirements and political needs were generally given priority over religious laws by the medieval rulers. A policy of appeasement of the **ulema**, however, continued simultaneously. The rulers at times gave various monetary benefits and other concessions to pacify this group and also to achieve certain political ends.

A further point worth stating here is that since religion was the basic component of the contemporary idiom, the rulers usually explained their policies and actions in religious terms.

### 30.2.2 Contemporary Historiography

According to the system of education, a medieval Muslim historian, too, had his training in the religious atmosphere of the **madradas** (medieval centres of learnings). This profoundly affected his style of writing. For the army of his patron he would use the term **lashkar-i Islam** (the army of Islam) and for that of the enemy **Lashkar-i Kufr** (army of the infidels). Similarly, he justified the casualties in the ranks of his patron as **shahadat** (martyrdom), and lost no time in sending the dead ones of the opposite side to hell. The application of such a style in Indian environment where the majority

he ruled belonged to a religion different from that of the ruler, was bound to create confusion. A careless interpreter of these expressions may readily conclude that the nature of struggle in Medieval India was basically religious, and that it was a tussle primarily between Islam and kufirs. But this would not be a mature way of analyzing the facts, because these should in no way be confused with the contemporary state policies. The fact that it was basically a matter of style, can be borne out by any number of examples from the same stock of material. Mohammad Salih (the author of the *Amal-i Salih*), a historian of Shah Jahan's reign, while describing the uprising of the Afghans, condemns the rebels under their leader Kamaluddin Rohila as *dushman-i din* (enemy of the Faith). In 1630, when Khwaja Abul Hasan (a noble of Shah Jahan) resumed his Nasik expedition, Abdul Hameed Lahori, (the court historian of Shah Jahan), used the term *mujahidan-i din* (warriors in the defence of the Faith) for the Mughal forces in spite of the fact that the opponents comprised more Muslims than non-Muslims, and many non-Muslims were in the Mughal forces. It is also interesting that the same historian terms the Mughal soldiers *mujahidan-i Islam* (warriors in the defence of Islam) when they faced the Nizam Shahi army which overwhelmingly consisted of Muslims. Similar terms were used by historians when expeditions were sent against a non-Muslim chieftain or noble or official. The army sent to crush the uprising of Jujhar Singh Bundela was also termed as *lashkar-i Islam*, although there was a sizeable number of non-Muslims on the Mughal side. The use of religious terms like *mujahid*, *shahadat*, etc. during the Balkh and Badakhshan expeditions under Shah Jahan, where the Mughals were fighting exclusively against their co-religionists, shows literary trend and academic style rather than purely religious nature of these terms. One should, therefore, be very wary while handling such material.

### 30.2.3 Modern Historiography

The trend of exploring this theme was started long back by Elliot and Dowson, who launched a big project of translating Persian sources of medieval period into English. They picked up such portions from the text which either referred to the 'religious bigotry' of the ruling classes (which was predominantly Muslim by faith), or the suppression of the local Indian masses (who were predominantly Hindu by faith) by a handful of the Muslim rulers.

Unfortunately, the communal spirit breathed by the British for obvious political reasons, was inhaled by a number of Indian scholars like Jadunath Sarkar, A.L. Srivastava and Sri Ram Sharma, etc.

The point is that the term "Religious Policy" is applied to the actions and reactions of the rulers and the ruled only when the two had different religions. If the rulers tackled their own religious community favourably or unfavourably, it ceases to be a matter of "Religious Policy"! That is why the published curses poured upon Aurangzeb's head for his "anti-Hindu" measures are available in abundance, but there is a virtual dearth of criticism for his suppressive attitude towards the leading Muslim scholars, philosophers and saints. Sarmad, Shah Mohammad Badakhshi, Mohammad Tahir and Syed Qutbuddin Ahmedabadi were executed on Aurangzeb's orders.

To set the matter straight, religion was often used by the rulers as a weapon to serve a variety of interests. Sometimes the rulers extended religious concessions to the local chieftains, on other occasions they preferred to suppress them by force. It would be injustice to history if the actions and reactions of the upper and lower ruling groups are viewed in religious terms only, disregarding the political and economic factors if they are clearly and really perceived to be operative.

Finally, there is yet another approach to this theme ("State and Religion") which is tremendously important but, unfortunately, rarely adopted by historians. We are referring to the role of each ruler's exclusively individual beliefs, whims and their perceptions of the problems of their respective period and also ways to tackle them. This approach would lead us to the psycho-analytical exercise relating to the individual rulers and the high ranking personalities of the period. You will see how this approach helps us in understanding the actions and ordinances of Aurangzeb to a great extent.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) How far can contemporary writings be held responsible for confusing the state policies with that of religion? Comment.

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2) Critically analyse Elliot and Dowson's approach towards the "religious policy" of the Mughal rulers.

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**30.3 ATTITUDE OF THE MUGHALS TOWARDS RELIGION**

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In the present section, we shall be examining the attitude of Mughal rulers towards religion and religious communities.

**30.3.1 Akbar**

Akbar's attitude towards religion and religious communities is generally evaluated on the basis of the measures which he took between 1560-65 and which primarily affected the non-Muslim population of the Empire. During this period the Emperor established matrimonial relations with the Rajputs, abolished the pilgrimage tax, prohibited the conversion of prisoners of war to Islam and abolished **jiziya**. These measures seem to have given Akbar the image of a "secular" emperor. In his personal beliefs, however, Akbar was a devout muslim. The works like **Gulzar-i Abrar** and **Nafais-ul Maasir**, suggest that the emperor showed deep respect to the **ulema** and bestowed upon this group abundant favours. Encouraged by emperor's bounty some of them persecuted even the non-Sunni sects of the Muslims. The suppressive measures taken against the Mahdavis and the Shias pass almost unnoticed in the chronicles of this period.

Akbar's "liberalism" has been explained in several ways. It is suggested that his upbringing and various intellectual influences moulded his personal beliefs. Likewise there is another view which finds Akbar having forsaken Islam and being hypocritical in his tolerant attitude. The current opinion, however, favours the view that these measures were political concessions. In the absence of any reliable Muslim support Akbar had little alternative but to seek alliance with the Rajputs and Indian Muslims. These measures were infact concessions given to the non-Muslims to win their support.

A change however appears in his attitude after 1565. There is "a marked retrogression in his attitude in matters pertaining to religion". A document signed by his **wakil** Munim Khan (August-September 1566) refers to the order regarding the collection of **jiziya** in the vicinity of Agra. In 1568, Akbar issued the famous **Fathnama** of Chittor (preserved in the **Munshat-i Namkin**) which is full of terms and idioms that can be compared with any other prejudiced and bigoted declaration. He declares his war against the Rajputs as **jihad**, takes pride in destroying temples and in killing the **kafirs**. Then we have **Sharaif-i Usmani** which tells that the Emperor ordered Qazi Abdul Samad of Bilgram to check the Hindus from practicing idol-worship there. To crown all this, in 1575, according to Badauni, Akbar reimposed **jiziya** though it did not work.

interesting aspect of this phase was that despite “an atmosphere of religious intolerance” most of the Rajput chieftains joined his service during the years 1566-79 (see Unit 11).

Religion, thus, was not the main concern of the Mughal Emperor. The significant issue before Akbar was to subdue the local chieftains. Religion was used only as a tool to attain political goals. When this strategy did not yield substantial gains, Akbar dropped it.

Another interesting aspect deserving consideration is the establishment of the **Ibadat khana** (in 1575). It was established with the aim to have free discussion on various aspects of Islamic theology. But the Emperor got disillusioned the way Muslim jurists used to quarrel over questions of jurisprudence. In the beginning only the Sunnis were permitted to take part in the discussions. But, from September 1578, the Emperor opened the gates of **Ibadat khana** to the **sufis**, **shi'as**, **Brahmins**, **Jains**, **Christians**, **Jews**, **Parsis**, etc. The discussions at **Ibadat Khana** proved to be a turning point as they convinced Akbar that the essence of faith lay in “internal conviction” based on ‘reason’. Akbar made an attempt by proclaiming himself **mujtahid** and declaring himself as **Imam-Adil**, to claim the right to interpret all legal questions on which there existed a difference of opinion among the **ulema**. This led to violent protests from a section of the Mughal society, but Akbar succeeded ultimately in curbing the predominance of the orthodox elements.

Akbar's **Tauhid-i Ilahi** (mistakenly called **Din-i Ilahi**) is another significant measure of this reign. R.P. Tripathi (**The Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire**, Allahabad, 1956, pp. 285-89) had examined this theme in detail. It is appropriate to cite him at length: “Shrewd as Akbar was, he must have felt that it was neither possible to melt all religions down into one, nor to launch a new religion which would have added one more to others. But he felt himself called upon to propagate his ideas among those who cared to listen to them... The sect had no sacred book or scripture, no priestly hierarchy, no sacred place of worship and no rituals or ceremonies except that of initiation... a member had to give a written promise of having... accepted the four grades of entire devotion, viz., sacrifice of property, life, honour and religion... [(it)] was not a religion and Akbar never intended to establish a church... neither force nor money was employed to enlist disciples... It was entirely a personal matter, not between the Emperor and the subjects, but between Akbar and those who chose to regard him as their **pir** or **guru**.”

What seems to us is that Akbar wanted to build up a devoted band of people around him, acting as their spiritual guide. Thus **tauhid-i Ilahi** had nothing to do with Akbar's religious or political policy.

In conclusion we may say that Akbar, in the interest of political consolidation, did not generally resort to religious discrimination. Yet he never hesitated in taking strong measures against those who threatened his position or exceeded the limits of social or ideological values regardless of their faith or creed. It should also be noted that stern actions were taken against individuals, and not against the religious groups as such.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) Analyse Akbar's attitude towards religion and religious communities up to 1565.

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2) Write 50 words on the **Ibadat Khana**.

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### 30.3.2 Jahangir

Jahangir on the whole made no departure from his father's liberal attitude.

R.P. Tripathi says that Jahangir "was more orthodox than his father and less than his son Khurram". It is alleged that he took harsh steps against the Sikhs, Jains and Sunnis. Here it may be noted that the victims of his wrath were only individuals viz. Guru Arjan Singh, Man Singh Suri and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi not the religious group *per se*. On the other hand, Jahangir visited Jadrup Gosain three times and discussed with him Hindu philosophy.

We find that Jahangir sometimes got provoked by the sectarian opinions of other persons. This trait had led him to imprison the Sunni religious leader Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi **mujaddid alif sani** for three years in the Gwalior fort. The Shaikh had claimed that once in his "dream" he came closer to God than the Caliphs in the past. Jahangir abhorred this statement. Many other Muslims, namely, Kaukab, Abdul Lateef and Sharif were imprisoned for expressing some opinion disliked by the Emperor.

It is noteworthy that the percentage of the Hindu **mansabdars** did not decrease during Jahangir's reign. He never launched a policy of the destruction of Hindu places of worship. He also did not reimpose **jiziya**, nor believed in forcible conversion to Islam.

### 30.3.3 Shah Jahan

By the time Shah Jahan ascended the throne in 1627 a change in the climate of tolerance and liberalism seemed to have set in. Islamic precepts now began to exercise some control over the affairs of the state as was evident from a change in the practice of paying salute to the emperor. Akbar had introduced in his court the practice of **sijda** or prostration, but Shah Jahan abolished it since this form of veneration was deemed fit for the Almighty. Shah Jahan substituted **chahar taslim** for **sijda**. Moreover the author of **Amal Salih** informs us that seventy six temples in the region of Banaras were demolished at the order of the Emperor. The argument was that "new idol houses" (**taza sanamkhana**) could not be constructed. However, the old ones built before Shah Jahan's accession were left untouched.

Significantly the Muslim orthodoxy could not exercise its influence on the Emperor in regard to the patronage given to Music and painting. **Dhrupad** was the Emperor's favourite form of vocal music. The best Hindu Musician Jaganath was much encouraged by the Emperor, to whom the latter gave the title of Maha Kavi Rai. The art of painting also developed during Shah Jahan's reign. Patronage to music and painting was a state policy since Akbar's time. His grandson, too, followed this tradition.

What is remarkable, however, is the fact that in spite of deviation in some respects from the norms laid down by Akbar and followed by Jahangir Shah Jahan did not impose **jiziya** on the non-Muslims. Nor did the number of the Hindu **mansabdars** fall below the number under his predecessors.

### 30.3.4 Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb's reign is shrouded in controversy. The opinion of scholars is sharply divided especially on matters pertaining to religion. There are essentially three main categories of scholars:

- a) Jadunath Sarkar, S.R. Sharma and A.L. Srivastava, find Aurangzeb guilty of religious bigotry and persecution.
- b) Shibli Nomani, Zahiruddin Faruki and Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi justify most of Aurangzeb's actions as political expedients.
- c) Satish Chandra and M. Athar Ali, attempt a "neutral" analysis of Aurangzeb's acts without getting embroiled into the "for" or "against" controversy.

We have the advantage of having details of the records cited by the scholars writing on Aurangzeb. We have thus divided Aurangzeb's measures in two parts: (a) minor inconsequential ordinances, and (b) major ones that could be considered as part of

ite" policy. We shall discuss these measures in a sequence and on their basis make an overall assessment of Aurangzeb with regard to his religious affairs.

As for the first, the following may be taken note of:

- i) Aurangzeb forbade the **kalima** (Islamic confession of faith) from being stamped on his coins lest the holy words might be desecrated under foot or defiled by the non-believers.
- ii) **Nauroz** (the New Year's Day of the Zoroastrian calendar) celebrations going on since his predecessor's times were abolished.
- iii) Old mosques, etc, neglected earlier, were ordered to be repaired, and **imams** and **muezzins**, etc. were appointed on a regular salary.
- iv) A Censor of Morals (**Muhktasib**) was appointed "to enforce the Prophet's Laws and put down the practices forbidden by Him" (such as drinking spirits, use of **bhang**, gambling and commercial sex).
- v) The ceremony of weighing the Emperor against gold and silver on his two birthdays (i.e. according to the lunar and solar calendars) was stopped.
- vi) In 1665, the Emperor instructed the governor of Gujarat that **diwali** and **holi** should be celebrated outside the **bazars** of the city of Ahmedabad and its **parganas**. The reason given for the partial ban of **holi** was that Hindus "open their mouths in obscene speech and kindle the **holi** bonfire in **chaklas** and **bazar**, throwing into fire the faggot of all people that they can seize by force and theft".
- vii) The practice of **jharokha darshan** was discontinued after the eleventh year of his reign. The Emperor took it to be unIslamic because the groups of the **darshanas** regarded their sovereign as their earthly divinity (and therefore they did not eat anything before they had the **darshan** of the Emperor).
- viii) Aurangzeb forbade the court musicians to perform before him "as he had no liking for pleasure, and his application to business left him no time for amusement. Gradually music was totally forbidden at court". However, the musicians were given pension. On the other hand, **naubat** (the royal band) was retained.

Now, the first five measures reflect Aurangzeb's Islamic concern and his zeal for social reforms as well. None of these could be called "anti-Hindu". The same is true for the seventh and eighth. Only the sixth measure touches the Hindus directly. Jadunath Sarkar comments that "It was really a police regulation as regards **holi**, and act of bigotry in connection with **diwali**". This is a well-considered verdict though Sarkar overlooks the point that there was no general ban on **diwali** or **holi** in the Empire. This should be juxtaposed with Aurangzeb's order for "putting a stop to Muharram processions... in all the provinces, after a deadly fight between rival processions had taken place at Burhanpur" in January, 1669. This ban, too, was a "police regulation" but in contrast with **diwali** and **holi**, it was not confined to any particular province.

The seventh measure, concerning **jharokha darshan**, had nothing to do with the Hindu community as such. It was prompted by the Emperor's **personal** perception of Islamic tenets.

The eighth order stopping musical parties at the court could by no stretch of imagination be perceived to have been aimed against the Hindus. In all likelihood the Muslim musicians at the court such as Khushhal Khan and Bismar Khan were the ones who were affected. Moreover, the nobles did not stop listening to music.

Let us now take up the major ordinances which could be considered to have been issued to hit the Hindus directly as a matter of "state" policy throughout the Mughal Empire. The first is the demolition of Hindu temples **which were newly constructed**. You may recall that Shah Jahan used the same argument i.e., **newly constructed (taza sanamkhana)**. But his measures seem to have been confined to the Banaras region only. On the other hand, Aurangzeb's orders were operative in whole of the Empire (especially in North India). He also instructed that old temples were not to be repaired.

In 1670, a **farman** was issued that all temples constructed in Orissa "during the last 10 or 12 years, whether with brick or clay, should be demolished without delay". Some of the important temples destroyed during Aurangzeb's reign were the

Vishwanath temple of Banaras, the Keshav Rai temple of Mathura and the "second temple of Somnath". In 1644, when he was the viceroy of Gujarat, he had desecrated the recently built temple of Chintaman at Ahmedabad by killing a cow in it and then turned this building into a mosque". Killing of cows in other temples, too, was deliberate.

The case of Mathura temple is interesting. This temple was built by Bir Singh Bundela who had gained Jahangir's favour for slaying Abul Fazl (1602). Jahangir had let this temple, built at the cost of thirty three lakh rupees, remain undisturbed. But Aurangzeb converted it into a large mosque and the name of Mathura was changed to Islamabad.

The next major measure was the re-imposition of **jiziya** in 1679 which was abolished by Akbar long ago. This act of Aurangzeb has puzzled many modern scholars. Some like Jadunath Sarkar see it as a clear case of bigotry in tune with the temple destruction. But Satish Chandra (*Jizyah and the State in India during the 17th century*, published in the **Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient**, Vol. XII, Part III, 1969) links it up with the Deccan problem (Golkunda, Bijapur and Marathas) and says that the Emperor was in a deep political crisis which led him to do something spectacular in order to win the unflinching support of the Muslims, especially the orthodox group. It is also thought that the imposition of **jiziya** might have been due to the financial crisis. But this is untenable because the income from **jiziya** was insignificant.

Another act related to the issue of orders (in 1655) asking the Hindus to pay 5% custom duty on goods, as against 2 and 1/2% by the Muslim merchants. Another **farman** was issued in 1671 to the effect that the revenue collectors of the **khalisa** land must be Muslims. Later on, he unwillingly allowed the Hindus to be employed in certain departments only, provided their number was kept at half of that of the Muslims.

Aurangzeb, however, seems to be an enigmatic personality. In contrast with his acts of intolerance, we find him inducting a large number of non-muslim officers in the state bureaucracy. Aurangzeb did not reduce the percentage of Hindus in the **mansab** system; rather it was higher compared to his predecessors. Many Hindus held high posts, and, two were appointed governors. It is also an extremely significant point that the same emperor who demolished so many places of worship, simultaneously issued grants in several instances for the maintenance of the temples and priests.

A psychosomatic explanation for these acts of Aurangzeb suggests that he had developed an intense consciousness of guilt. He was the person who had killed his brothers and imprisoned his old father—something that had never happened in the Mughal history from Babur to Shah Jahan. The last act even violated the **turah-i Chaghatai** by ascending the throne while his reigning father was alive. Such a person was, sooner or later, bound to be overtaken by unprecedented remorse, penitence and contrite. His actions, possibly, emanated from this feeling, and he took shelter in the Islamic shell. In this respect all his acts were ultimately the consequence of his **individual** decision.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) Discuss Jahangir's attitude towards non-muslim subjects.

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- 2) Define the following:

**Sijda** .....

**Zamin bosc** .....

**Taza Sanamkhana** .....



- 3) Comment on Aurangzeb's regulations regarding **holi** and **diwali**.

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### 30.5 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit, we have discussed the policies of the Mughal rulers towards the major religious communities. Since Mughal sovereigns were not restrained by any constitutional provisions, they were autocrats not responsible to anyone. Therefore, in one sense, their measures and policies could be said to have been those of the state itself.

There was no constant religious policy-perse-of the Mughal state. It varied according to the whims and personal perceptions of the Mughal Emperors. Babur and Humayun did not have time to formulate any clear and definite policy. Akbar and Jahangir, were tolerant to a large extent. Shah Jahan did depart from the norms of his predecessors in certain respects. It was however, the reign of Aurangzeb, which saw the practice of puritanical and anti-Hindu measures. These were perhaps the result of Aurangzeb's sensitivities as an individual and a consciousness of guilt that pervaded his "self"

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### 30.6 KEY WORDS

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**Ibadat Khana** : In 1575 Akbar established, Ibadat Khana originally established for the purpose of religious discussion with Muslim theologians. However, later its doors were opened for the scholars of all religions.

**Imam-i Adil** : Just ruler.

**Muezzins** : One who calls for prayers in a mosque.

**Mujahid** : "Infallible authority"

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### 30.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-secs. 30.2.1, 30.2.2. Discuss that it was the contemporary style of writing that confused the modern scholars who did try to analyse their meanings in the proper perspective. It was common practice to call a war as **jihad** and the enemy as **kafir**, etc. Elaborate it.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 30.2.3. Analyse how Elliot and Dewson's translation of Mughal Chronicler's accounts, in which they have chosen, mostly, the events where either the Mughal ruling class is reflected as 'bigot' or oppression of the "Hindu" (Indian) masses is reflected by a "Muslim" (Mughal rulers).

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-sec. 30.3.1. Discuss that religious concessions to various groups during 1556-1568 were motivated by the political exigencies. Akbar had to rely on Indian Muslims and Rajputs in the Wake of Turani nobles' rebellion. But when he realized that rigorous measures are required he took no time to revert back and give it a religious tone as the political need was (he did it in 1568). Elaborate.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 30.3.1. Analyse how the religious discussions in **Ibadat Khana** put him in total disarray and led him to conclude that the "essence of faith lay in internal conviction based on reason".

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) See Sub-sec. 30.3.2. Discuss that it is generally blamed that he was against these communities but this is not the fact.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 30.3.3.
- 3) See Sub-sec. 30.3.4. Discuss that such measure he took in the case of Gujarat only for certain reasons (elaborate). Similar measure he had taken in regard to **Muharram** procession. So it was more related to political issue than a religious one.



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**SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK**

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- Shireen Moosvi : **Economy of the Mughal Empire c 1600:**
- Tapar Rai Chaudhuri : **The Cambridge Economic History of India VOL-I.**  
and Irfan Habib
- Indu Banga : **The City in Indian History.**
- S.A.A. Rizvi : **The Wonder That was India, VOL. II.**
- S.R. Sharma : **Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors.**
- R. Krishnamurthy : **Akbar—The Religious Aspect.**



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# UNIT 31 INDIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

## Structure

- 31.0 Objectives
- 31.1 Introduction
- 31.2 Arabic and Persian
- 31.3 Sanskrit
- 31.4 North India
  - 31.4.1 Hindi
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  - 31.4.3 Punjabi
- 31.5 Western India
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- 31.7 South Indian Languages
  - 31.7.1 Tamil
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  - 31.7.3 Kannada
  - 31.7.4 Malayalam
- 31.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 31.9 Key Words
- 31.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

## 31.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we will discuss the languages and literature that flourished in India during the 16th to mid 18th centuries. After going through this unit you will:

- be able to appreciate the variety and richness of literature produced during the period under study;
- know about the main literary works in India in the following languages: Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Sanskrit, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada; and
- be familiar with some of the main historians, writers and poets writing in the above languages.

## 31.1 INTRODUCTION

The Mughal rule created some semblance of political unity in India. Further, it not only encouraged an integrated internal market and an increase in foreign trade, but also generated an atmosphere of creative intellectual activity. Apart from the Emperors, the Mughal princes and nobles, too, patronised literary activity. The regional courts of the Rajput Rajas and the Deccan and South Indian rulers also did not lag behind. Mainly inspired by the Bhakti movement, a parallel popular literature in different vernacular languages also developed during this period.

We have already discussed historical works in Persian and other languages in Block 1. In this unit, we will confine ourselves to literature other than historical works.

It would not be possible for us to take account of all the languages in which literature was being written. Our main objective will be to highlight important literary works in the different parts of the country.

## 31.2 ARABIC AND PERSIAN

Arabic works under the Mughals were largely confined to religious subjects, though a few poets composed verses in Arabic poetry.

Persian was the official language of the Mughal court. Babur, the first Mughal ruler, was an accomplished poet and he wrote his memoirs in Turki which was later translated into Persian by Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan. Babur also wrote a didactic work known as **Mathnavi Muhibin**. His chief contribution to the development of Persian literature in India lies in having brought with him a number of Persian poets. The major influx of Persian writers into India started with the return of Humayun from his exile in Iran. It was at Shah Tahmasp's court in Iran that he met a number of poets and artists, some of whom he persuaded to accompany him to India. When he later set up his own court, he was able to coordinate the works of the indigenous poets and writers with those of the talented immigrants.

The stream of Persian poets who visited India during the 16th and 17th centuries created a rich synthesis in a new genre of Persian literature known as (**Sabaq Hindi**) ('Indian style'). The patronage given to the exponents of this particular school continued from Akbar to Shah Jahan, which included notable Indian and Persian writers like Faizi, Urfi, Naziri, Talib Amuli, Kalim, Ghani Kashmiri, Saib and Bedil.

The Mughal Emperors and princes often themselves composed poetry in Persian; for example, Humayun composed a Persian diwan. Abul Fazl writes that thousands of poets resided at Akbar's court. Apart from Faizi, there was Ghazali Mashnadi who was known to have been an extremely talented man. He wrote many **mathnavis**. Faizi succeeded Ghazali Mashhadi. His principal work included a diwan named **Tabashir al Subh**, which consisted of **Qasidas, Ghazals, Elegies, Qit'as** and **Ruba'is**. He had planned to write a **Khamsah** according to the literary fashion of the time, but could complete only a few; for example, **Nal Daman**. Faizi's prose works included a Persian adaptation of **Lilavati**, his epistles and Persian translations of Hindu religious books. According to some critics Faizi enjoyed great prestige in Turkey and it was his influence which carried the Indo-Persian poetry beyond the borders of India.

Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan, an accomplished scholar and talented poet, lived during Akbar and Jahangir's reigns. His fame chiefly rests on maintaining a library that contained more than four thousand books. He was known for his patronage extended to numerous writers like Naziri Nishapuri, Urfi Shirazi and Mulla Abdul Baqi Nihawandi.

Shah Jahan has been acclaimed as one of the greatest patrons, who according to the contemporary Persian poet Ali Quli Salem, enabled the full flowering of Persian poetry in India. Abu Talib Kalim of Hamadan succeeded Qudsi as Shah Jahan's court poet and completed, beside his own **diwan**, as epic poem entitled **Padshahnama** describing Shah Jahan's achievements. The greatest Persian poet of this period was Mirza Muhammad Ali Saib of Tabriz, who was known to have created a new style in Persian poetry. On his return to Isfahan, he recorded his indebtedness to India by calling her as a second paradise. Thus, the patronage of the Mughal ruling class not only created a new genre of Persian literature, it also increased the excellence in prose writings.

In the South, Persian literature received generous patronage from the Adil Shahi rulers of Bijapur. The court of Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1627) attracted a large number of poets and writers both from North India as well as Central Asia. Malik Qummi (d. 1640) was one of the best known poets patronised by the Adil Shahi dynasty. His contemporary Mulla Zuhuri was decidedly the greatest of the Persian poets who flourished in the Deccan. Known to possess a distinct style in both poetry and prose, he wrote a book called **Saginama** based on the model of the **Gulistan** of Sadi.

The Qutab Shahis of Golconda were also known as great patrons of Persian scholarship and literature under whose patronage varied works were executed in Persian. In 1651, Muhammad Hussain Tabrezi's Persian dictionary **Burhan Qati** was compiled under the patronage of Abdulla Qutab Shah. Bustami's **Hadiqal Salatin** — a collection of the lives of eminent Persian poets — was completed in 1681.

Four historical chronicles of the Qutub Shahi dynasty were rendered into verse during the reign of Muhammad Quli Qutab Shah. An encyclopaedic work of considerable merit (Abu Imad's **Khiraqatul 'Alam**) in six volumes testifies to the interest in and contact with Persian culture that was maintained through the warm hospitality that the Qutub Shahi rulers offered to the Persian scholars visiting their kingdom. As a result, Persian as the regional court language at Bijapur and Golconda gained a niche in the South.

Another category of literary works mostly written in Persian is mystical or **sufi** literature. Under this category come: the treatises written by the **sufis** on mysticism; collection of letters written by **sufis**; **malfuzat** (discourses by **sufi** saints); biographies of **sufis** and collection of **sufi** poetry.

**Sakinatul Uliya** written by Prince Dara Shukoh is a biographical account of the **sufi** Miya Mir and his disciples. The **Majm'aul Bahrain** (Mingling of two Oceans) is his other work related to **sufism**. In this work he has compared the Islamic **sufi** concepts with Hindu philosophical outlook.

During this period, Persian literature was enriched by the Mughal Emperors by getting classical Indian texts translated into Persian. During Akbar's period **Singhasan Batisi**, **Ramayana** and **Rajtaringni** of Kalhan were also translated. Badauni was associated with all these translations.

The Persian literature produced at the Mughal court exercised a tremendous influence in the formation of regional literature, especially those cultivated by the Muslims, the greatest innovation being the evolution of a literary Urdu language. Other languages modelled on Persian tradition are Punjabi, Pushtu, Sindhi, Baluchi and Kashmiri. All these share a written script with Persian.

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### 31.3 SANSKRIT

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During this period, Sanskrit ceased to flourish as the main language of the Imperial court. Though Mughal Emperors and princes like Dara patronized Sanskrit scholars, it never again gained the same importance in Northern India. On the other hand, it was in the South, particularly due to the inspiring presence of Madhavacarya and Sayanacarya, that Sanskrit literature continued to enjoy the patronage of the kings of Vijayanagar. After 1565, the rulers of Tuluva and Aravidu dynasties, the Nayakas of Tanjore and the chiefs of Travancore and Cochin kept alive the custom of patronising Sanskrit.

The various genres of Sanskrit literature — **Mahakavyas**, **Slesh Kavyas**, **Champu Kavyas**, **Natakas** and particularly historical **Kavyas** continued. In the field of **Mahakavyas** mention should be made of Raghunatha Nayaka, a ruler of Tanjore and his court poets. Among his many works the biography of his father Achyutaraya should be specially mentioned. Srinivasa Dikshit a minister of the Nayakas of Gingee was a prolific writer: he had composed eighteen dramas and sixty **kavyas**. Another literary figure who flourished at the Nayak Court of Tanjore was Govinda Dikshita. His great works are **Sahitya Sudha** and **Sangitsudhanidhi**.

Another prominent Sanskrit Scholar Appaya Dikshita (1520-92) was patronised by the Nayak chiefs of Vellore. He wrote more than one hundred books on various branches of Sanskrit learning.

Nilanatha Dikshit (17th century) was a minister of Tirumalanayaka of Madura. He wrote a number of **Mahakavyas** among which two dealing with **Siva-leela** and the penance of **Bhagirath** were rated very high by scholars.

Other notable Sanskrit poets of this period were Chakrakavi, the author of **Janaki Parinaya** and **Narayana** or **Narayana Bhattatire** who was a friend of Manadeva Zamouri, the king of Kozhikode (1637-1648). The latter's contribution to Sanskrit literature is profuse and varied covering the fields of **Kavya**, **Mimamsa**, **grammar**, etc. However, he excelled most in **Mahakavyas** and is considered as one of the greatest poets of Kerala.

It is the historical 'Kavyas' and 'Natakas' written during this period that give us a glimpse into the social perception of these Sanskrit writers who still adhered to the classical formula. Interestingly, the first of these historical kavyas was composed by a woman — Tirumalamba — who is described in the inscription as 'the reader'. Her work **Varadgumbika parinaya** deals with the marriage of Achutadevaraya. Apart from the historical value which is considerable, this kavya is considered as one of the most beautiful 'Champus' of the later period.

Of the many works based on the heroic exploits of Raghumalla Nayaka of Tanjore two are worthy of notice, **Sahityasudha** composed by Govinda Dikshita and **Raghunathabhyudaya** of Ramabhadramba. These contain references to many historical events.

An important source for Maratha history are a number of **Mahakavyas** based on the life of Shivaji and his son. The most important work in this context is the **Kavya** known as **Anubharata** or **Sivabharata**. The work was begun by Kavindra Paramananda a contemporary of Shivaji, continued by his son Devadatta and grandson Govinda who now incorporated the life of Shambhuji in their narrative.

Interestingly, some Muslim rulers also came to be included in a historical **Kavya** as heroes by their court poets like Pandita Jagannath who wrote **Jagadabh** in praise of Dara Shukoh, and **Asaf Vilasa** addressing Asaf Khan. Dara Shukoh himself composed a **prasasti** in honour of Nrisimha Sarasvati of Benaras.

The most popular manual on logic written in South India was **Tarkasongraha** (c. 1625). Its author Annambhatta came from the district of Chittoor. He also contributed a number of commentaries on many philosophical works. Important contributions to **Dwaita** philosophy were made by Viyasraya (d. 1539) and his pupil Viyayindra (1576). The former wrote **Bhadojjivana**, **Tatparyacandrika** and **Nyayamitra**. Vijayendra authored **Upasamharavijaya** and **Madhava-Tantramukhabhushana**. Dalpati (1490-1533), a high officer at the Nizam Shahi court of Ahmednagar, wrote **Nririmhaprarada** which is an extensive work on religious and civil laws.

In spite of the examples mentioned above, Sanskrit literature was on the decline. Writers were obsessed with writing numerous commentaries rather than composing original works, and though scientific texts, works on music and philosophy continued they were few and far between. The bulk of the works were on technicalities of form and commentaries on existing texts or grammar. One of the major causes of decline of Sanskrit poetry is ascribed to the rise of vernacular literature in this period. The Bhakti movement which swept the country earlier inspired the regional poets who now composed elegant lyrics in a language which was closer to the spoken words. The popularity of these literary works lay in the instant response which they drew from the common people as well as the aristocracy.

### Check Your Progress 1

1) Give a brief account of:

- a) Mystical literature
- b) Persian Literary works of South India
- c) Classical Indian Texts translated in Persian.

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- b) .....
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c) .....

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2) Write a short note on the literary works written in Sanskrit during 16th and 17th centuries.

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## 31.4 NORTH INDIA

In North-India the major languages in which literature was being produced were Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi.

### 31.4.1 Hindi

Hindi language as known to-day developed over a long period of time. A number of dialects spoken in various regions of northern India contributed to its development. The main dialects from which Hindi emerged are Brajbhasa, Awadhi, Rajasthani, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Malwi, etc. **Khari Boli**, a mixed form of Hindi, also came into existence in the 15th-16th centuries.

The origins of Hindi date back to 7th and 10th centuries. It was during this period that Hindi was evolving out of **Apabhransha**. The early period of Hindi poetry is called **Virgatha kala** (age of heroic poetry). During this period, the exploits of Rajput kings and chieftains were narrated in poetic form. Some of the famous poems are **Prithiviraja Raso**, **Hamir Raso**, etc.

The form of poetry which developed during the subsequent period was devotional (**Bhakti**). Kabir was the most famous exponent of this form. The same tradition continued during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Derived from a broken form of Sanskrit known as "**Maghadi-Prakrit**", the Hindi literary language bloomed under the pervasive influence of the **Bhakti** movement. The new poetry found its best creative expression in the writings of Gosvami Tulsidas. The poet born in eastern U.P. around 1523 became a mendicant and began to write his masterpiece **Ramcharita-Mansa** in 1574. The popularity of this work rested on its language which closely resembled Tulsidas' native Awadhi dialect. Tulsidas took up the life of Rama as that of an ideal man and built around it his philosophy of '**Bhakti**'. His observations touched the lives of common men.

Among the many works that Tulsidas wrote **Vinaya-Patrika** or a prayer book brings out his philosophy best. Though he preached pure devotion to an almighty God, in his personal life he clung to a single deity investing him with all the necessary attributes of a cult figure.

Tulsidas inspired a number of other writers — like Agradas and Nabhajidas — who composed the **Bhakta** — a well-known account of the Vaisnava saints dating back to the ancient period.



Devotion to Krishna rather than Rama as the highest incarnation of the Supreme Being was propagated by another set of poets who were known as Ashtachapa. These eight men were all disciples of Vallabhacharya among whom Surdas who wrote between 1503-1563 was considered the best. The exceptional personality who brought a new appeal to the Krishna hymns was Mirabai.

A Rajput princess turned into a mendicant, Mira herself became the heroine of many romantic legends. Her songs addressed Krishna as a lover and portrayed the final subjugation of a 'bhakta' to the Supreme Being. These songs originally composed in the Marwari dialect of Rajasthan were altered through usage of Brajabbasha which was popular mainly in Gujarat and parts of Northern India.

The Awadhi dialect of Hindi was enriched by a number of Sufi poets who used popular tales to explain their mystic messages. Mostly these dealt with themes of love. Among the writers in this genre were Maulana Daud the author of **Chandayan**, and Kutaban the composer of **Mrigavati**. The greatest was, however, Malik Muhammad Jayasi whose famous work **Padmavati** was composed between A.D. 1520-1540. It is a detailed mystic analysis of the popular legend of queen Padmini of Chittor and Alauddin Khilji. The work, though better known for its theme, should also be acclaimed for the excellence of the Awadhi language in which it was composed. Some Muslim poets belonging to the 17th and 18th centuries are Osman Shaikh Nabi, Kasim and Mir Muhammad.

Literature in Brajabbasha flourished under the patronage of Akbar and was enriched by poets and musicians and his court including Tansen and Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan who composed lyrics on the 'leela' of Krishna.

### 31.4.2 Urdu

The word derived from the Turki 'Urdu' meaning a military camp came into existence as a dialect among Muslims who ruled in the Deccan and South India from the 14th century onwards. The literary speech arising out of it was known as 'Dakken' and can be traced to the 15th century. This language though retaining traces of pre-Muslim dialects developed mainly by drawing its form and themes from the current Persian literature. This continued till the end of the 17th century even as the script continued to be Perso-Arabic.

The major centres of Dakhni literature were Gujarat, Bijapur, Golconda, Aurangabad and Bidar. The oldest writer in this Muslim Hindi tradition was the famous Sufi poet Sayyid Banda Nawaz Gesudoraz (author of the **Me'raj ul Ashiqi**) who played an important role in the politics of the Bahmani kingdom in 1422.

Two important poets of this literary dialect flourished in Gujarat, Shah Ali Mohammad Jan and Sheikh Khub Muhammad. The major patrons of Dakhni literature were the Qutab Shahi Sultans of Golconda. Among them Muhammad Quli Qutab Shah (1580-1612) was both a poet and the romantic hero of a love poem by his court poet Mulla Wajhi. Among the notable poets residing in Golconda mention should be made of Ghawasi, Ibni Nishati and Tabi.

Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1626) the Sultan of Bijapur, was a great patron and himself an author of a book on music in Dakhni. Local events often featured in the works of the Dakhni poets as seen in the work of Hasan Shawqi who wrote a poem commemorating the battle of Talikota (1565) in which the Muslim Sultans of the Deccan won a victory over the Hindu kingdom of Vijaynagar. Though most poets were Muslim like Rustumi and Malik Khusnud, the most important poet was a Hindu Brahmin who wrote under the pen-name of Nusrati. His major works were a long poem **Alinama** eulogising his patron Ali Qdil Shah II (1656-1672), and **Gulshani Ishq** — a romance of a Hindu called Manohar and his love for Madhumalati. (on the line of the Nayak-Nayika theme).

The important works of Rusthmi included **Khavar Nama**. Another important poet was Wajhi, the author of **Qutbo Mushtari**, a **masnavi** and **Sab Ras** (a work of prose). By far the most important Urdu writer of the period was Wali Dakkani. His great contribution to Urdu poetry is that he brought Urdu **ghazal** in line with Persian traditions. Wali had sharpness of perception, intensity of feeling and a flexible and varied style. One of his contemporary Urdu poet Mirza Daud also contributed to the literature of the period.

By 1750, Urdu became well established in the Delhi region and Dakkani declined after the conquest of the Deccan by Aurangzeb.

### 31.4.3 Punjabi

The Punjabi language evolved from a broken form of Sanskrit known as **Sauraseni Prakrit** or more aptly **Sauraseni Apabhhransa**. Along with Brajabbhāsa and Rajasthani, Punjabi has the same grammatical base. Yet, prior to Guru Nanak (1469-1538), there is no written record of Punjabi literature. The earliest text is the 'Adi Granth' whose compilation was completed by Guru Arjun Dev in 1604. Since it was a sin to add or delete even a single word from the original text, it has come down to us in its pristine form. It, therefore, serves as the best model for medieval literature.

Since the Gurus discuss largely the nature and attributes of the creator, the form of the text is composed as hymns set to specific Ragas. The expressions of Guru Nanak are particularly aphoristic as they show the process of deep reflection which are combined with certain intuitive principles of self-realisation.

Besides the composition of the Gurus, significant poetical work propagating the Sikh faith was done by Bhai Gurdas (1559-1637) who displays a mastery of metres. His work is followed by devotional poetry enriching the Punjabi or the Gurumukhi language.

Apart from poetry, a number of prose writings, mainly biographies called **Janam Sakhis** and expositions of the principles and tenets of the Sikh faith, emerged. In the secular field, a number of romances derived mainly from Muslim writers called 'Qissa' came to prevail. The most popular among these were the romance of Hir and Ranjha, and Mirza and Sahiban. The best exponent of the Hir and Ranjha story is Waris Shah. The latter was a gifted poet with a good command over writing dialogues with tragic traits. This finds special appeal in his rendition of the sequel where the hero and heroine both die.

The best version of Mirza-Sahiban romance is to be found in the writing of Peelu, who brings out the psychological conflict of the heroine Sahiban, caught as she was between loyalty to her family and her love for Mirza.

A Hindu poet Aggara composed the saga or Var of Haqiqat Rai, a Sikh Hindu youth martyred at Lahore during the reign of Shah Jahan for his faith

The contribution of Sufi poets to the development of Punjabi literature is considerable. The best known among these are Sultan Bahu (1631-91), a dervish who belonged to the Jhang region and expressed himself through intense poetry on renunciation and spiritual devotion.

Shah Husain (1553-1593) was a mendicant, who roamed the countryside. He was greatly loved by the people. He wrote passionate lyrics set to music. This genre is known as **Kafi** and accepted by most of the Sufi poets, serving both as a musical measure as well as a lyric. The best known of the Sufi poets was Bulhe Shah (1658-1758) who wrote about ecstasy, love and renunciation of material things. His works specially emphasize the spiritual aspects of life, but his metaphors are derived mainly from the rural life of Punjab. Bulhe Shah's works have passed into folklore and form a rich part of Punjab's literary tradition.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the contribution of Bhakti movement to Hindi literature.

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2) Discuss the contribution of Deccani kingdoms to the growth of Urdu literature.

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3) Give a brief account of:

- a) 'Adi Granth'
- b) Sufi poets writing in Punjabi

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b) .....

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### 31.5 WESTERN INDIA

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In this sections we will discuss the literature produced in Marathi and Gujarati languages.

#### 31.5.1 Gujarati

The beginning of the 16th century marks the onset of a new phase in the history of Gujarati literature. This phase, properly called the second phase, lasts for almost two centuries before being taken over by modern Gujarati. Like several other languages, the major strain in the literature of this period is religion and mysticism. At the beginning of the 16th century Vaishnava Bhakti movement had become the dominant social theme in Gujarat. Therefore most of the literature of this period relates to the Bhakti tradition.

The major poets of this period in Gujarat are:

- Bhalana (c. 1426-1500)
- Narsimha Mehta (c. 1500-1580)
- Akho (c.1615-1674)

Of these, Narsimha Mehta exercised great influence on later poets. On account of the richness of his imagination and the variety of his creative activity, he is considered the father

of Gujarati poetry. Bhalana was more of a classical poet. His poetry is rich in content and expression, and he is rated as the first artist in Gujarati verse. Akho banked more on his innate genius and keen spiritual and social insight. He was no scholar but sang with fervour to bring about spiritual and social reform.

After the end of the 17th century, decadence set in the literature of Gujarati. There was, however, a great variety in the literary works created at this time — we have devotional, didactic, quasi-metaphysical and secular forms of literature.

### 31.5.2 Marathi

The Marathi literature of 16th and 17th centuries is characterised by two main trends — religious and secular. The landmarks in the religious poetry of the period are:

- **Khavista-Purana** of Father Thomas Stephens, (1549-1619) written in the vein of Gyaneshwar.
- poetic narratives of Muktesvara, echoing the events of his age through the episodes of the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharat**.
- **Abhanga** of Tukaram, making direct appeal to the people through the intensity of its physical quality.

The secular literature of this period has the poetry of Ramdas, the great saint-preceptor of Shivaji and the works of Vaman Pandit (1615-1678). Ramdas combines the spirit of liberation and national reconstruction with devotional and religious fervour. The approach of Vaman was academic and literary. Therefore, his works are in an ornate Sanskritized style. His famous work is a commentary on Gita where he advocated the path of knowledge as against the path of devotion.

Another kind of secular poetry of this period found expression in the **Povadas** and the **Lavnis** of the Senvis. The **Povadas** were a kind of ballad brisk in movement and vivid in diction. The **Lavnis** were romantic in character with a deep colouring of the sensuous sentiment.

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## 31.6 EASTERN REGION

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Bengali, Assamese and Oriya were the major languages in which literature was produced in eastern India.

### 31.6.1 Bengali

In the East, Bengali language and literature flourished after the advent of Sri Chaitanya. The Vaisnava poets, inspired by the saint's mystic preachings, composed a number of lyrics in a new literary language with a blend of Maithili and Sanskrit. This is known as **Brajaboli** and the lyrics — **Padavali**. A new genre of Vaisnava biographies came into being. Though the earliest biography of Sri Chaitanya was written in Sanskrit by Murari Gupta, this was followed quickly by the contemporary accounts of Brindabandas in Bengali. Brindabandas's **Chaitanya Bhagavata** or **Chaitanya Mangal** was probably composed within a decade of the saints' death and is considered to be the most authentic account of the social conditions of his time.

The next important account is the **Chaitanya-Charitamrita** by Krishnadas Kaviraj. Though shrouded in controversy regarding its date of composition, the work serves as the first philosophical treatise which elevated Sri Chaitanya into an incarnation of Sri Krishna and laid the philosophical foundation of Gaudiya Vaisnavism.

Among a large number of biographies of Sri Chaitanya which followed, **Gouranga Vijay** by Chudamanidas, two works both named **Chaitanya Mangal** by Jayananda and Lochandas deserve to be mentioned. The latter is however best known for introducing a new style of folk songs called **Dhamali**, dealing exclusively with the love affairs of Krishna.

The lyrics known as **Padavali** constitute another important branch of Vaisnava literature. Here, the many moods of amour termed 'Rasa' in Sanskrit literature was incorporated as the main norm for the construction of the 'Padas' (verse). The romance of Radha and Krishna formed the major theme, though all major works began with an eulogy to Sri Chaitanya who was hailed as the united manifestation of both Radha and Krishna. A large number of narrative poems were written on the legends of Krishna, particularly the portion immortalised in the **Bhagavat dasam skandha** as the **Vrindaban leela**.

While Vaisnava literature began to be patronised by Hindu zamindars and Muslim governors, another group of narrative poems known as 'Mangal kavyas' became popular. The themes propagated the importance of the local cult-deities like Chandi, Manasa Dharma and transformed the Puranic gods like Siva and Visnu into household deities where they assume the garb of the Bengali peasant or artisan. The narrative form of the **Mangal Kavyas** were derived from the Puranas. The narration of certain myths upholding the manifest powers of a single cult-deity was repeated even in the local versions of the Bengali **Mangal Kavyas**. But as the Bengali poets observed the effect of the Puranic writers, they inculcated into the narratives their own experience: hence, the fearsome Bhairava Siva, the killer of demons in the Puranas, has his trident recast into agricultural implements and assumes the appearance of an absent-minded rural yogi. A syncretic feature developed through the **Dharma-mangal Kavyas** where the Buddhist Dharma is merged with the Puranic Narayana and the Muslim Pir comes to be known as Satyapir or Satyanarayana.

A number of Muslim writers wrote in Bengali. The first notable writer Daulat Qazi was from Arakan. This was due to the close association that existed between Bengal and Arakan ever since Arakan had been freed from Burma. The Maga ruler of Arakan had been forced to take shelter in Bengal where he lived for 26 years. It was mainly due to this event that Bengali had virtually become the court language of Arakan.

Daulat Qazi rendered into Bengali a number of popular romances prevalent in the Gujarat-Rajasthan area such as Laur-Chandrani or Mayna Sati. It is said that Laur Chandrani was completed after his death by a poet who was even more talented — Alaol. Alaol, the son of a Muslim governor of lower Bengal, was captured by the Portuguese pirate and sold as a soldier for Arakan army. His talents as a musician and poet endeared him to Sulaiman, a minister at the Arakan court and also the king's foster nephew Magan Thakur. These well-placed friends at the court freed Alaol from his bondage. He rendered into Bengali Malik Mohammad Jayasi's **Padmavat**, the Persian romance **Saifulmulkbadijjamal**, and also two works of Nizami. Alaol through his translations of Persian poetry and other romances into Bengali instilled a secular theme in Bengali literature.

A number of Muslim writers flourished in Bengal from 16th century onwards and though they wrote mainly on secular theme (Sabire wrote a version of the **Vidya Sundar**), they also wrote on the tragedy at Karbala. A mixed theme often overlapping the frontiers of the two religions were to be found in such works as Sayid Sultan's **Resularjay** which included some Hindu gods, or it was found in the works like **Yuga Sambad** or **Satya Kali Vivadsambad** written by his disciples.

### 31.6.2 Assamese

As in Bengal, Assamese literature also developed in response to the Bhakti movement. It was Sankaradeva who ushered in Vaisnavism and, being a good poet, he also introduced into Assamese a rich crop of poetry. He was followed by his disciple Madhavadas whose principal works were mainly the **Bhakti-ratnavali** dealing with different aspects of bhakti, a handbook consisting of a large number of hymns, the **Baragitas** depicting the life of Krishna in Vrindavan and another work also dealing with the childhood of Krishna. The particular characteristics of Vaisnava poetry in Assam that sets it apart from those of Bengal and Gujarat is the lack of eroticism usually found in the themes of Radha and Krishna. In the Vaisnava poetry of Assam, the amorous love-play of Krishna is avoided, the emphasis being laid only on his childhood.

Translations from the epics and Puranas also formed a part of the literary projects of the Assamese writers. While Rama Rarasvati translated parts of the Mahabharata for his patron the king of Cooch Bihar; similarly, Gopal Chandra Dvija wrote the story of Krishna as told in the **Bhagavata** and **Vishnu Purana**.

Assamese prose developed mainly through the compilation of historical chronicles known as Buranjis. These were written at the command of the Ahom kings who overran Assam and continued to rule the country fighting off the Mughals when necessary. The Sino-Tibetan dialect of the Ahoms is known to have greatly influenced Assamese prose just as it gave a cultural identity to the people.

### 31.6.3 Oriya

Oriya literature in this period was still under the spell of Sanskrit. A number of Kavyas were composed on Puranic themes by Madhusudana, Bhima, Dhivara, Sadasiva and Sisu Isvaradasa. Romances on non-Puranic themes were composed by Dhananjay Bharya. An interesting poetical experiment is seen in the work *Rasa Kallol* which deals with the love of Radha and Krishna, where every line begins with the letter 'E'. Among other notable works of this genre are *Ushabhilasa* of Sisu Sankara Dasa, the *Rahasyamanjari* of Deva-Durlava-Das and the *Rukminibibha* of Kartik Dasa.

It was in the 17th century when Ramachandra Pattanayaka wrote his *Haravali* (in which the hero is an ordinary man and the heroine is the daughter of a farmer) that Oriya literature developed a popular base. Though these show an interesting innovation, Oriya poetry in general followed the main stream of derivations from Sanskrit literature. Vaisnava works like *Prema-Panchamrita* by Bhupati Pandita opened the path of theology through poetry imbued with religious devotion. His richness of language has often been compared to Jayadeva.

Though the Oriya poets generally wrote in the conventional language derived from Sanskrit, an artificial style came to be established in the 18th century marked by an overt eroticism expressed through verbal jugglery. The greatest exponent of this new style was the poet Jpendra Bhanja (1670-1720) who ushered in a new era in Oriya literature that continued till the 19th century.

#### Check Your Progress 3

1) How did Chaitanya tradition enrich Bengali literature?

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2) Write a brief note on Assamese literature of the period under study.

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## 31.7 SOUTH INDIAN LANGUAGES

The important South Indian languages in which literature was being written were Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

### 31.7.1. Tamil

In Tamil literature of the period we find a number of philosophical works, commentaries, literary texts and Puranas. A large number of works are related to Shaivism and Vaishnavism. Haridāsa, a Vaishnava poet, wrote **Irusamaya-vilakkam** (an exposition of Saivism and Vaishnavism). Another Tamil work of significance was **Sivadarumottaram** (1553) written by Marainanarbandar. The book having 1200 verses deals with chronology, temples and their constitution and theology. **Salva-Samayneri** (the path of Saiva creed) by the same author is a work on daily religious observance of Saivas. Kamalai Nanaprakaras wrote a Purana on Tirumaluvadi and a number of manuals on Saiva worship. Niramba Alagiya Desikar and his disciples also enriched the Purana literature. Desikar wrote **Setu-puranam** and Puranas on Tirupparangiri and Tiruvaiyaru. One of his disciples composed Tiruvalturpuranam (1592).

Madai Tiruvengadanathar an officer of the Nayak of Madura was an important literary figure of the 17th century. He wrote an exposition of Advaita Vedanta in a long Tamil poem.

Other important works of the period in religious and philosophical fields are **Cidambarapuramam** (1508) by Purana Tirumalainathan, **Ariccandira puranam** (1524) by Nallur Virakavirayer, **Sundara pandiyan** of Anadari (1580), **Kandapuramam** (1625) of Kacciyappa Saivacarya and **Palanittalapuramam** (1628) by Balasubramanya Kavirayar. Ellapa Navalar (C. 1542-80), a vellala poet of Tanjore, wrote an excellent **Kovai** on Tiruvarur around the same time. A Pandyan King Ativirarama of Tenkarsi wrote a celebrated work **Naidadem**. He also translated a number of popular Sanskrit works into Tamil.

Among the works of grammar, **Lidambarapattiyal** by Paranjoti, **Maran-Alankaram** by Kurugai Perumal Kavirayar and **Ilakkanavilakkam** of Vaidyanatha Desikar are important.

**Nigandu-cudamoni** by Jaina scholar Mandalapurusha, **Kodayram** by Kayadarar are important lexicons of the period.

### 31.7.2 Telugu

Telugu as a language has affinities with Tamil and Kannada, but literary idioms depended on Sanskrit.

During the period of our study, the most glorious phase of Telugu literature was during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya (1509-1529) of Vijaynagar. He himself was an acclaimed scholar. His **Amuktamalyada** is considered one of the great Kavyas in Telugu literature. The most celebrated poet at his court was Allarrani Peddana. He was given the title of **Andhrakavi Tepitamha** (grandfather of Telugu poetry), **Svarocisha Sambhava** or **Manucarita** is his most known work. Nandi Timmaha, another poet at Krishnadeva Raya's court, wrote **Parijatapaharana** in verse which is an episode of Sri Krishna's life.

Bhattumurti, better known as Rama Raja Bhushan, is known for his **vasucaritra** (a work of poetry based on one episode of **Mahabharata**). Another work **Hariscandra** — **Nalopakhyanam** is a poem in which each verse has two meanings: it tells the story of Nala as well as Raja Harishchandra. Pingali Suranna wrote **Raghava-Pandaviya**, capturing the stories of both **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata**. Kumara Dhirjati wrote his famous work **Krishnadevaraya Vijaya** around the end of 16th century in a poetic form narrating the victories of the famous king.

The most popular figure of Telugu literature is Tenali Ramakrishna. He is remembered as a willing and humorous man. His **Panduranga Mahatmya** is one of the great works of Telugu poetry. Molla, a poetess, who is said to have belonged to low caste, wrote the popular Telugu version of the **Ramayana**.

Quli Qutb Shah (1550-83) also was a patron of Telugu literature. Addanki Gangadhara and Ponnaganti Telengana dedicated their books **Tepatisamvaranopakhyaha** and **Yayatricaritva** to the Shah.

Manumanci Bhatta's **Hayalakshana**, a work on horses and their training, belongs to the 16th century.

With the fall of the Vijaynagar empire, patronage to Telugu literary figures of the 17th century was given by smaller states like Gadikota, Nellore, Sidhavatam, Gingee, Tanjore and Madurai. Malti Ananta of Sidhavatam wrote **Kakusthavijayam** (1590-1610), Pushpagiri Timmana of Nellore translated Bhartihari's **Nitisataka**. The king of Tanjore Raghunatha Nayayka wrote one of the earliest works of prose, the **Valmikicaritram**.

### 31.7.3 Kannada

Most of the early Kannada works were written by the Jainas; their contribution to the Kannada literature continued during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Vadi Vidyanda of Geroppa compiled **Kavyarasa** in 1533 which is an anthology of prominent Kannada poets. Another Jaina scholar Salva (c. 1550) wrote a Jaina version of the **Bharata Ratnakaravarhi** and produced a number of important works in the second half of 16th century like **Trilokararara** (on Jaina cosmology), **Aparajitasataka** (on philosophy) and **Bharataesvaracarita** (the story of the famous King Bharata). Many of his songs are still sung by the Jains and are known as **Annagalapada**.

The important work of Lingayat literature is **Cenna Basava purana**. Its hero, Cenna Basava, is considered an incarnation of Siva. The work contains a number of stories of saints. **Prandharayacarita** of Adrisya (c. 1595) is another important Lingayat work.

Some important Saiva works of the period are **Sidhesvara-purana** of Virakta Pantadarva and **Viveka-cintamani** (c. 1560). **Siva yoga pradipika** of Nijagunna-siva-yogi, **Bhava cintaratna** and **Virasaivamrita** or **Mallanarya Guibbi**, and **Sarvainapadagalu** of Servainamurti.

During the same period, Vaishnavita literature was also written. It is also in the form of translation of Sanskrit works into Kannada. A part of **Mahabharata** was translated by Kumaraa Vyasa, and the rest by Timmana around 1510. Lakshmira composed **Jamini Bharata**.

Another form of Vaishnavita literature was the popular songs of *clases* (mendicant singers). According to Nilakanta Sastri, these were inspired by Madhavacarya and Vyasaraaya. Chaitanya's visit to the South in 1510 did much to stimulate the growth of this popular type of song. Purandas Dara (d. 1564) is the most famous in this line of singers.

Among the works on Kannada grammar the **Karnataka abdanisana** (1604) of Bhattakalanka Deva is the foremost.

### 31.7.4 Malayalam

Malayalam originated as a dialect of Tamil in the Odayar region. By the fourteenth century, it acquired an independent status. A certain tradition of poets (coming from Niranam in Travancore) from the 15th century onwards contributed greatly in developing Malayalam style of poetry. Rama Panikkar was one of the important poets of this tradition. Some of his prominent works are **Bharata Gatha**, **Savitri Mahatmyam**, **Brahmandepuranam** and **Bhagavatam**.

Cherruseri Nambudiri, a great poet of 16th century, is credited for developing modern Malayalam literature. His famous work **Krishnagatha** is a beautiful poetic narration of Krishna's life. The sixteenth century Malayalam literature produced a number of popular songs and ballads like Anju's **Tampuren pattu** and Eravikuttipilla **pattu**.



Tuncat Ramanujam Eluttaccan's works covered Hindu mythology, religion and philosophy. His famous works are Adhyatma Ramayanam Kilipattu, Bharatam Killipattu and Harinamakirtanam.

A popular form of dance-drama literature called Attakatha or Kathakali also seems to have originated during 16th century. Raman Attam is one of the earliest Attakatha. A large number of new Kathas enriched Malayalam literature.

**Check Your Progress 4**

1) Write brief comments on

a) Tamil Literature on Saiva tradition.

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b) The literary works produced in Telugu during the rule of Krishnadeva Raya (1509-1529).

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2) Discuss the contribution of Jain scholars to Kannada literature.

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3) a) Who is credited with the development of modern Malayalam literature?

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b) What is Attakatha?

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c) Who was Tenali Ramkrishna?

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## 31.8 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, we came to know that a rich corpus of literature was produced in India during the period of our study.

The Mughal court extended its patronage to not only Persian language and literature but also to Sanskrit, Hindi and a few others. Other kings, chiefs and even nobles patronised literary activities. The most notable feature of the period is the development of popular literature written chiefly outside the royal patronage. This was mainly devotional or bhakti poems written in Hindi and in almost all regional languages.

The literature of almost all languages had a heavy content of religion and mythology. Logic, philosophy and grammar were also the subject-matter of a number of works. Another notable feature is the large-scale translation of works from one language into other. Especially translation of Sanskrit works into a number of popular languages made them more accessible to the common people.

## 31.9 KEY WORDS

<b>Champu Kavya</b>	:	A literary form where poetry and prose were mixed.
<b>Diwan</b>	:	A collection of poems of a poet, e.g. Diwan-Ghalib.
<b>Elegy</b>	:	Songs of mourning, sad poems. In Urdu literature it was a separate form of poetry called marsiya.
<b>Ghazal</b>	:	A popular form of poems which primarily were love poems but gradually other subject-matter was also included. The most peculiar feature of ghazal is its fragmentariness. Each line stands by itself — a self-contained unit.
<b>Khamrh</b>	:	a stanza of five lines
<b>Lexicon Mahakavya</b>	:	a dictionary epic
<b>Mathnavi (Masnavi)</b>	:	a poem written in rhymed couplets, generally used for descriptive and narrative verse.
<b>Prasasti</b>	:	a piece of writing or poem written in praise of somebody.
<b>Qasida</b>	:	An ode or poem written in praise of somebody.
<b>Qita'</b>	:	a small part of a long poem.
<b>Ruba'i</b>	:	a short poem of four lines, the first, second and fourth ones rhyme, but the third line does not.
<b>Slesh kavya</b>	:	a form of figure of speech which is a poem and the word is used to convey two messages.
<b>Tarji-band</b>	:	a kind of verse in which the same line recurs at stated intervals.
<b>Tarkib-band</b>	:	a kind of poetry.

## 31.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 31.2.
- 2) See Section 31.3.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the literary works written by Bhakti saints. See Sub-section 31.4.1.
- 2) In the early stage Urdu as a literary language flourished in Deccan. See Sub-section 31.4.2.
- 3) See Sub-section 31.4.3.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) Sri Chaitanya inspired a number of poets on Bhakti tradition. See Sub-section 31.6.1.
- 2) Assamese literature during this period was inspired by Bhakti tradition. See Sub-section 31.6.2.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) a) A number of Tamil works were written in Saive tradition. See Sub-section 31.7.1.  
 b) Krishnadeva Raya himself was a poet and writer and encouraged and patronised a number of poets of the period. See Sub-section 31.7.2.
- 2) The early Kannada literature was greatly enriched by Jain scholars. See Sub-section 31.7.3.
- 3) a) Cherriseri Nambudri.  
 b) A popular dance-drama literature in Malayalam.  
 c) He was a Telugu literary figure well-known for his wit and humour.



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# UNIT 32 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## Structure

- 32.0 Objectives
- 32.1 Introduction
- 32.2 Science
- 32.3 Agricultural Technology
- 32.4 Textile Technology
- 32.5 Military Technology
- 32.6 Shipbuilding
- 32.7 Metallurgy
- 32.8 Glass Technology
- 32.9 The Printing Press
- 32.10 Time-Reckoning Devices
- 32.11 Miscellaneous
- 32.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 32.13 Key Words
- 32.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

## 32.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will:

- read about the main developments in the various sectors of science and technology during the Mughal period, and learn the nature of response of the Indians to European science and technology.

## 32.1 INTRODUCTION

In course EHI-03 (Block 6, Unit 22), you were offered glimpses of technology in India during the Delhi Sultanate. The emphasis in the above course was on the introduction of new crafts by the immigrant Muslims. In the present Unit, focus will be on the new articles of technology and agricultural crops and fruits, etc. brought by the Europeans during the 16th and 17th centuries. We will also give you a brief statement on the state of science during this period.

## 32.2 SCIENCE

No breakthrough was made in scientific studies concerning physics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, geography and mathematics. The traditional knowledge continued to be taught, discussed and re-written in the form of commentaries without adding anything worthwhile. The Indian and the Greco-Arabic views on scientific issues held sway. A French traveller, Careri, observes about the Muslim scholars in India:

“As for sciences they can make no progress in them for want of Books; for they have none but some small manuscript works of Aristotle and Avicenne in Arabick.”

But we should not deny the fact that there were some very learned and able scientists during the period of our study. One of them was Mir Fathullah Shirazi who joined Akbar's court at Agra in 1583 (d. 1588). Abdul Fazl opines that “If the old books of wisdom had disappeared, he could have laid a new foundation [of knowledge] and would not have wished for what had gone”. Akbar mourned his death in these words: “Had he fallen in the hands of the Franks [Europeans], and they had demanded all my treasures in exchange for him, I should gladly have entered upon such profitable traffic and bought that precious jewel cheap.” He is credited with having invented some mechanical devices (see Sections 32.5 and 32.11-vi) and also the introduction of a ‘true’ solar calendar (called *Ilahi*) at Akbar's

order in 1584. But he did not propound any new scientific theory or formula distinct from the traditional ones in India at that time.

Indians were exposed to European learning. Abul Fazl was aware of the discovery of America by Europeans: he gives the Persian term *alam nau* for the "New World". But this knowledge does not appear to have become a normal part of the teaching of geography in India. Galileo's discovery (in contrast to Ptolemy's world-view) that it is the Earth that moves round the Sun did not reach the Indian scientists. Similarly, Newton's three Laws of Motion as well as his Law of Gravity were unknown in India at this time. Bernier, a French physician, who came to India during the second half of the seventeenth century, claims to have been in the company of a Mughal noble Agha Danishmand Khan for five or six years, to whom he used to explain the new discoveries of Harvey and Pecquet concerning circulation of the blood. Bernier held a very poor opinion of the Indians' knowledge of anatomy. Our *hakims* and *vaidis* did not show any interest in Harvey's discovery.

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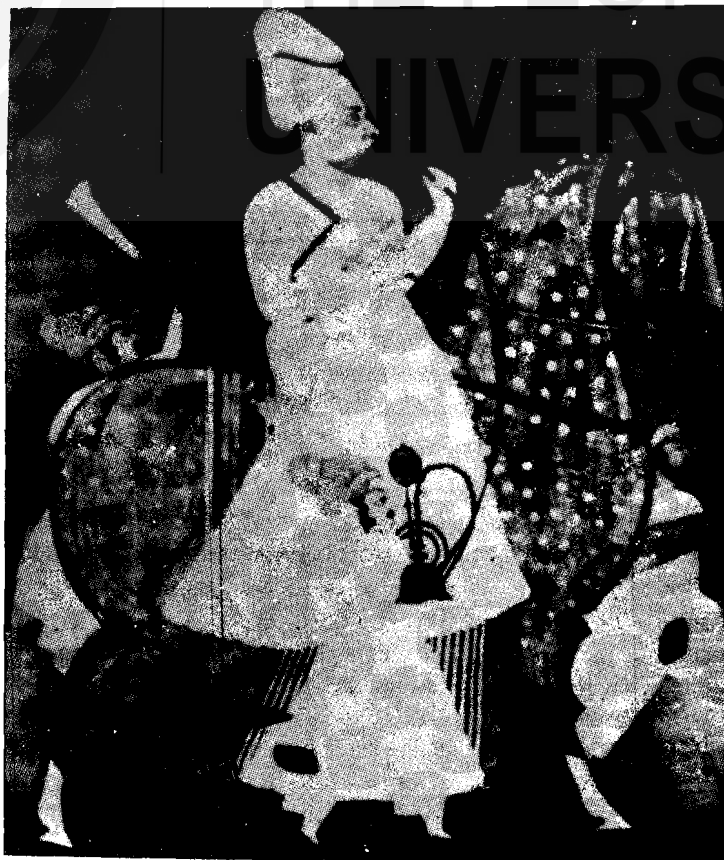
### 32.3 AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY

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We do not find any radical change during the Mughal period insofar as the plough, iron ploughshare, irrigational devices, methods of sowing, harvesting, threshing and winnowing are concerned (for details see course EHI-03, Block 6, Unit 22). However, for sowing, apart from broadcasting and seed-drill, we get evidence for dibbling also. This method was employed especially for cotton cultivation; a whole was made into the ground with a pointed leg, the seed was put into it and covered with earth. As for threshing, besides using oxen, corn ears were also beaten with stocks.

One remarkable development during this period was the introduction of some new crops, plants and fruits. Many of these were brought by Europeans, especially the Portuguese. The Mughal elite had started growing Central Asian fruits in India from the days of Babur.

Tobacco, pineapple, cashew-nuts and potato were the most important crops and fruits that came from America. Tobacco led to *huqqa*-smoking (hubble-bubble). Besides, tomato, guava and red chillies were also brought from outside. Maize is not listed in Abul Fazl's *Ain-i Akbari*. It seems that this, too, was introduced by Europeans from Latin America.



Tobacco Smoking : Huqqa

The seeds of numerous varieties of melons and grapes grown around Agra were brought from Central Asia. Cherries were introduced in Kashmir during Akbar's reign.

Fruits of better quality were grown by seed propagation. It is doubtful whether the art of grafting in horticulture was extensively practised during the Delhi Sultanate. P.K. Gode thinks that grafting became prevalent in India only after A.D. 1550. This skill was well known in Persia and Central Asia. However, mangoes of the best quality were exclusively produced in Goa through grafting by the Portuguese. Some European travellers to India paid glowing tributes to the delicious mangoes of Goa called Alfonso, Our Lady, Joani Perreira, etc. Alfonso is still a celebrated variety in India.

Among the Mughal Emperors, Shah Jahan alone takes the credit for getting two canals dug (nahr faiz and Shah nahr).

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What is dibbling? Discuss its use.

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- 2) Discuss the new crops and fruits introduced in India during the 16th-17th centuries.

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## 32.4 TEXTILE TECHNOLOGY

You have read in some detail about the textile craft in course EHI-03, Block 6, Unit 22.3. The section took note of numerous processes, e.g., ginning, carding, spinning, weaving, dyeing, painting and printing. You also know now that spinning-wheel was brought to India by the Turks. In fact, no radical addition or improvement seems to have been made during the seventeenth century. However, two developments must be highlighted; first, carpet-weaving under Akbar's patronage at Lahore, Agra and Fathpur-Sikri; and second, production of silk and silk fabrics on a large scale.

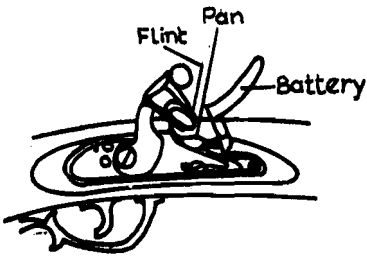
The Europeans did not bring their own textile techniques to India, at any rate during the first half of the seventeenth century. Actually, they did not possess any superior technology in this area during this period, except perhaps to the English Company to send silk dyers, throwsters and weavers to Qasimbazar in Bengal. Italian silk filatures were introduced into India in the 1770s.

## 32.5 MILITARY TECHNOLOGY

You have read in course EHI-03, Block 6, Unit 22.6 that stirrup, horseshoe and gunpowder were introduced into India by the Turks. Fire-arms were used sporadically for the first time during the second half of the 15th century in some regions of India like Gujarat, Malwa and Deccan. But fire-arms on a regular basis developed through the agency of the Portuguese from A.D. 1498 in South India, and by Babur in the North in A.D. 1526. Babur used guns and cannons in battles against the Rajputs and Afghans.

These guns were actually matchlocks. Europe knew of two more devices to fire a gun: wheel-lock (1520s) and flint-lock (1620s) in which matchcord was dispensed with. Abul Fazl claims the manufacture of handguns without matchcord in Akbar's arsenal, but he is silent on the alternative mechanism. This could be a flint-lock because wheel-lock even in Europe was employed for pistols. At any rate, these handguns (flint-locks) were produced on a limited scale, most probably for Akbar's personal use only because we are told that Indians in North India were scarcely familiar with this technique during the early decades of the seventeenth century. In fact, Mughal paintings regularly depict matchlocks down to Aurangzeb's times.

European pistols were available at Burhanpur for sale as early as A.D. 1609. Sometimes Europeans gave pistols in gifts to Indians. But the Indians did not learn the art of wheel-lock. Cannons of various sizes were manufactured in India for the Indian rulers.



FLINTLOCK



Use of Cannons : Siege of Chittor

We need not go into details about the numerous traditional weapon — offensive and defensive — like swords, spears, daggers, bows and arrows, shields and armours, etc. It is interesting to know that the Indians in general preferred curved swords, in contrast to the European's straight double-edged rapiers. The Marathas, however, late in the seventeenth century took a liking to European swords.

For cleaning gun-barrels, Abul Fazl writes:

“Formerly a strong man had to work a long time with iron instruments in order to clean matchlocks. His Majesty [Akbar], from his practical knowledge, has invented a wheel, by the motion of which sixteen barrels may be cleaned in a very short time. The wheel is turned by a bullock.”

At another place, once again, Abul Fazl credits Akbar with the invention of a mechanism by which seventeen guns were joined in such a manner as to be able to fire them simultaneously with one matchcord.



Medieval Swords

## 32.6 SHIPBUILDING

The entire vessel in medieval times everywhere was constructed of wood. Various methods were employed to join the planks. One of these was rabbeting which was widely practised in India. This was basically on the tongue-and-groove principle: the 'tongue' of one plank was fitted into the 'groove' of another. The next step was to smear the planks with indigenous pitch or tar, and lime with the double purpose of stopping up any fissures and preserving the timber from sea worms. Fish-oil was also used for doubling the planks. The Indians did not adopt the European method of caulking — a technique for making joints or seams of the planks tight or leakproof by forcing oakum (made of loose fibre or untwisted old ropes, etc. mixed with melted pitch) between parts that did not fit tightly. The reason was caulking did not have any technical superiority over the indigenous method for performing the same task. Moreover, caulking was more expensive than the Indian practice.

Prior to the European advent, the planks of ships and boats were joined together by stitching or sewing them with ropes made of coir, or sometimes with wooden nails. The Europeans were using iron nails and clamps which made their vessels stronger and durable. The Indians lost no time in adopting the new technique. Around A.D. 1510, Varthema noticed "an immense quantity of iron nails" in Indian ships at Calicut. Abul Fazl (A.D. 1593-94) informs us that for a ship of Akbar 468 mans (maund) of iron were used. Some Mughal paintings establish the presence of iron nails, strips and clamps for constructing vessels.

Similar positive response to European iron anchors is evidenced during the seventeenth century. Earlier, anchors were made of big stones.



Iron Anchor



The Indians used buckets to bail out the leaked water in the ships. However, the European iron chain-pumps started to be used in India, though not widely, during the second half of the seventeenth century. But these were not manufactured in India: they were purchased or borrowed from Europeans.



Use of Buckets in Bailing out Water

**Check Your Progress 2**

1. Discuss the mechanical devices used in guns during the 16-17th centuries.  
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2. What are rabbeting and caulking? Why Indians showed no preference to adopt caulking technique in shipbuilding.  
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## 32.7 METALLURGY

We give below the main features of metallurgical practices in India:

- i) The fuel for smelting consisted of wood charcoal (coal was not known). Thus, smelting was generally carried out at places which were near the source of wood supply.
- ii) The smelters used small furnaces which perhaps did not have refractory or heat-resistant clay.
- iii) The bellows were ribless and small which did allow efficient air-blast to generate very high temperature in the furnaces to reduce the ore to a totally liquified state.
- iv) In case of iron and bronze, the metal was melted in diverse small furnaces (sometimes eight in number) wherefrom the molten material went to the mould. Since the quality of the molten metal in each furnace was not necessarily the same, the fabricated object could not have always been of high quality.



Processing of Metal : Smelting : Use of Charcoal; Furnaces; Bellows (Ain -i Akbari)

Abul Fazl describes the technique of making iron cannons and handgun barrels at Akbar's arsenal. Perhaps these techniques were newly invented. We do not know whether improvements were made during the subsequent period. Cannons were made of bronze, brass and iron.

Zinc metallurgy seems to have started in India somewhere around twelfth century A.D. Abul Fazl mentions Jawar (modern Zawar) in Rajasthan where zinc was procurable. Archaeological studies near Zawar have revealed the presence of sealed clay retorts for zinc distillation (which, condensed/cooled, yielded the metal).

Copper mines were located at Khetri in Rajasthan. Tin was not a natural product of a country: it was imported from other Asian regions. Bronze was in use right from the days of the Indus valley culture. Alloys like brass (copper and zinc or tin) were fabricated in India.

One must mention here the production of the true "wootz" iron in India from c. 400 B.C., especially in Andhra Pradesh. Probably "wootz" is a corruption of the Telugu word "ukku". It was exported to centres of swordmaking like Damascus in Syria (called Damascus swords).

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## 32.8 GLASS TECHNOLOGY

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Glass is a complex **artificial** industrial substance. We should not confuse it with crystal, quartz, obsidian glass, glaze and faience. That glass was not scarce in India has been ably shown by M.G. Dikshit (**History of Glass**), but he admits that Indian glass objects "did not range or go beyond the manufacture of tit-bits like beads and bangles"

With the arrival of Muslims, pharmaceutical phials, jars and vessels of glass came to India from the Islamic countries, but there is no evidence to show that Indians had started fabricating these objects in imitation.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, a variety of glass articles were brought to India by the Europeans. All these were new for us: for example, looking-glasses (mirrors made of glass). We know how to make mirrors of metals (bronze and copper) but not of glass. Another object was spectacles made of glass lenses. The Europeans gave these things to Indians as gift and, sometimes, they also sold them (but the market was very limited). Thus, the Indians started using European glass articles without manufacturing them during the period under study.



Spectacles



Rectangular Looking Glasses

It seems that the technique of fabricating sand or hour-glass was known in India during the 15th century, but the Mughal paintings exhibit European-made sand-glasses only, which were brought to India by the Europeans. However, the positive evidence for its manufacture in India comes from the second half of the seventeenth century.

Apart from these, we got from Europe drinking-glasses, magnifying or burning glasses and prospective glasses (telescopes). Since the latter were made of glass lenses like the spectacles, there was no question of their indigenous manufacture during the seventeenth century.

## 32.9 PRINTING PRESS

It is amazing that the Chinese knowledge of wooden-block printing did not evoke even a ripple of response in India in spite of frequent communication between the two countries in the past. European movable metal types were brought to Goa around A.D. 1550 by the Portuguese. The latter started printing books on Christian saints, sermons, grammars and vocabularies in the Marathi and Konkani languages and dialects, but in Roman script rather than in the Devanagari script.

Emperor Jahangir is once reported to have expressed doubt about types being cast in Persian or Arabic scripts during a discussion with the Jesuits, whereupon the latter promptly showed him a copy of the Arabic version of the gospel, probably printed at Vatican in A.D. 1591. This topic was not brought up again by Jahangir.

In A.D. 1670s, Bhimji Parak, the chief broker of the English Company at Surat, took a keen interest in this technology. A printer was sent to India in A.D. 1674 at Bhimji's request, along with a press at the latter's expense. Bhimji intended to contrive types in 'banian characters after our English manner', but it could not be feasible since the English printer did not know type-cutting and founding. No type cutter was sent from England to assist Bhimji. Nevertheless, Bhimji persisted in this endeavour to realize his dream of a printing-press with Devanagari fonts. He employed his own men, obviously Indians, to do the job. The English factors at Surat testify (A.D. 1676/77) that, 'we have seen some paper printed in the banian character by the persons employed by Bhimji which look very well and legible and shows the work feasible'. But then, at that crucial moment, Bhimji lost heart and abandoned the project midway.

### Check Your Progress 3

- List the main glass items which the Europeans brought to India in the 17th century.

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- Write a note on Bhimji Parak's efforts to start printing-press in Devanagari characters.

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## 32.10 TIME-RECKONING DEVICES

The history of horology unfolds a variety of devices adopted by mankind in different countries. Among them, gnomons, sundials, clepsydras (water-clocks), sand-glasses, mechanical clocks and watches stand out as the most significant contrivances for time-reckoning with varying degrees of accuracy.



Sand Glass

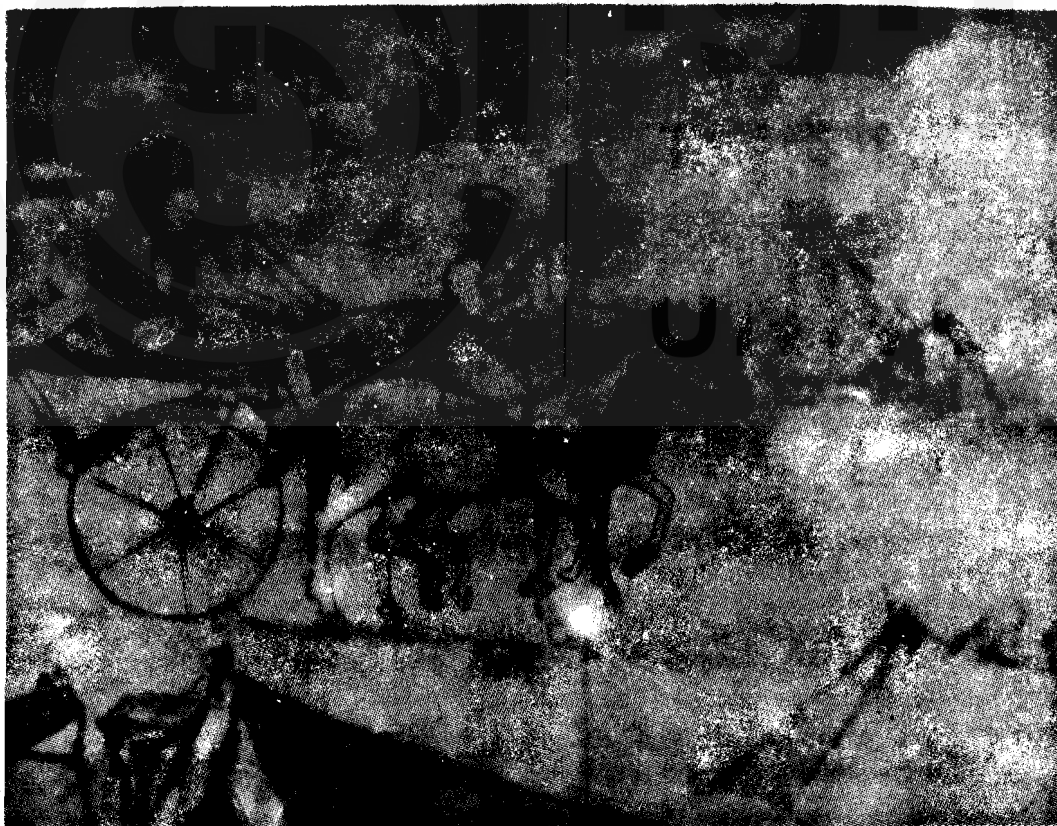
In India, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, clepsydras of the sinking-bowl variety appear to have been the most commonly used device for measuring time, at any rate, in urban centres. The Persian term for the bowl was *tas*, while *tas gharial* — denoted the whole mechanism (bowl and gong). The Indian word *gharial* is derived from the gong that was struck with a mallet to announce the time indicated by the sinking-bowl. Water-clock is mentioned during the Delhi Sultanate in Afif's *Tarikh-i Feroze Shahi* which related the installation of a *tas gharial* by Sultan Feroze Shah Tughlaq at Ferozabad during the second half of the fourteenth century. Babur also describes the mechanism in the *Baburnama*. Abul Fazl, too, takes note of the details.

Much before the Mughals, the Europeans had invented the two most essential features of an ordinary mechanical clock — the weight-drive and escapement. Europeans' clocks and watches were often given in gift to Indians, especially the elite groups (Jahangir was presented a watch by Sir Thomas Roe, but the Emperor's memoirs does not mention this fact). The Jesuit church at Agra had a public clock-face with a bell whose "sound was heard in every part of the city". Notwithstanding the exposure of a substantial cross-section of Indians to European mechanical clocks and watches for a long time, there is no evidence to indicate its acceptance among any social group of Indian society for general use. These were mere toys, and novelties for the Indians who received them "diplomatic" or ordinary gifts. The one important reason for non-acceptance was the incompatibility of the Indian time-reckoning system with that of Europe at that time. In Europe, the system of twelve equal double-hours prevailed, while the Indian system consisted of 4 quarters (*pahr*) in the

Further, each **pahr** was divided into **gharis** of 24 minutes each. Thus, the Indian system had 60 "hours" (of 24 minutes) to the full day, and the European consisted of 24 hours of 60 minutes each.

## 32.11 MISCELLANEOUS

- i) True Arch, dome and lime-mortar were already introduced into India by the Turks (See course EHI-03, Block 6, Unit 22.4). No significant development took place in building technology during the seventeenth century. However, we may take note of one practice, that is, preparation of a sort of "blue print" of the building to be constructed. This was called **tarh** (outline) in Persian which consisted of drawing on a thick sheet of paper by employing "grid of squares" (graph sheet) for indicating proportions. We may also mention that Indian buildings did not have window-panes and chimneys which Europeans used back home.
- ii) The Indians did not employ metallic (copper) boilers to refine saltpetre like the Europeans; the former continued with earthen pots to do the job.
- iii) Oxen-drawn carts were in common use, especially for transporting commercial goods. Horse-drawn carriages were very rare: they were meant only for passengers. Sir Thomas Roe presented to Jahangir an English coach drawn by four horses. The Emperor enjoyed a ride in it (he called it **rath farangi**). The sovereign, and some nobles got such coaches built by Indian carpenters for their use. But this interest was short-lived; it did not catch on during the seventeenth century.



Horse Drawn Carriage

- iv) One chemical discovery was made in the early years of Jahangir's reign. It was the rose-scent (**'itr Jahangir**). The Emperor records in his Memoirs (**Tuzuk-i Jahangiri**):

This 'itr is a discovery which was made during my reign through the efforts of the mother of Nur Jahan Begum. When she was making rose-water, a scum (**charbi**) formed on the surface of the dishes into which the hot rose-water was poured from the

jugs. She collected this scum little by little; when much rose-water was obtained a sensible portion of the scum was collected. There is no other scent of equal excellence to it. In reward for that invention, I presented a string of pearls to the inventress Salima Sultan Begum... gave this oil (roghan) the name of 'itr Jahangiri.

- v) Another chemical discovery was the use of saltpetre for cooling water. Abul Fazl comments that saltpetre, which in gunpowder produces the explosive heats, is used as a means for cooling water. He also gives the details of how to do so.
- vi) Emperor Akbar is reported to have invented an oxen-drawn cart which, when used for travelling or for carrying loads, could grind corn also. For the latter purpose, however, watermill was scarcely used in India under the Mughal rule. One Mughal painting (A.D. 1603) depicts an undershot watermill to illustrate a story set outside India proper. Even windmill (asiya-i bad; pawan chakki) for grinding corn was very rare; one was erected at Ahmedabad in the seventeenth century whose partial remains could be seen there. Ordinarily, handmills made of two stones were used for this purpose. It was a very old practice.

Check Your Progress 4

1. Why Indians showed reluctance to adopt the European time-reckoning devices.

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2. Fill in the blanks:

- i) Itr Jahangiri was invented by \_\_\_\_\_.
- ii) Saltpetre was used for \_\_\_\_\_.
- iii) Indian buildings did not have \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in their houses.
- iv) Indians used \_\_\_\_\_ boilers to refine saltpetre.

**32.12 LET US SUM UP**

This Unit introduced you to several aspects of Science and Technology in India during the Mughal rule. The treatment of the subject-matter was on two levels: (a) indigenous development, and (b) Indian response to European Science and Technology.

No noteworthy contribution was made by the Indians in Science in this period. As for technology, you must have noticed that some inventions were made and new methods employed, especially in the military sector. In the chemical sector, too, rose-scent and the use of saltpetre for water-cooling were entirely new discoveries.

The most important and interesting aspect of this Unit is the exposure of the Indians to European Science and Technology. The Indian response in this respect was not uniform. For example, while in shipbuilding we come across some positive responses it was not so with regard to glass technology. Positive, negative and indifferent responses varied from one technology to another due to diverse valid reasons. As for Science, the Indians do not appear to have profited from the European experience.

**32.13 KEY WORDS**

<b>Faience</b>	: earthenware decorated with opaque coloured glaze
<b>Filatures</b>	: reeling of silk from cocoons
<b>Fissures</b>	: crack of some length and considerable depth usually occurring from some breaking; a narrow opening
<b>Flint(s) lock</b>	: a lock for gun used chiefly in the 17th and 18th centuries having a flint fixed in the hammer that on striking the battery of the pan ignited the priming which communicated its fire to be the charge through the touchhole
<b>Fonts</b>	: the act or process of casting or founding; a set of any sort of typological material
<b>Founding</b>	: the act of melting and casting
<b>Gnomons</b>	: pointer on a sundial; an object that by the position or length of its shadow serves as an indicator especially of the hour of the day
<b>Mallet</b>	: a hammer that has a cylindrical typically barrel-shaped head of wood or of other soft material
<b>Obsidian</b>	: volcanic glass that is generally black, banded or spherulitic and has a marked conchoidal fracture, a bright lustres, and a composition similar to rhyolite but usually with more water
<b>Phials</b>	: a small glass bottle for medicine
<b>Rapiers</b>	: a straight two-edged sword especially of the 16th and 17th centuries with a narrow pointed blade used chiefly for thrusting and heavier than the 18th century small sword.
<b>Throwster</b>	: one who throws silk or synthetic filaments
<b>Wheel-lock</b>	: a gunlock in which sparks are struck from a flint.
<b>Wootz</b>	: Kanarese <b>ukku</b> steel; a steel made in India by crude methods in small crucibles according to the old process for making fused steel

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## 32.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

1. See Sec. 32.3. Define dibbling. Mention that it was a new agricultural device used for sowing the seeds.
2. See Sec. 32.3. List the new crops and fruits introduced during the 16th and 17th centuries. Also discuss from where these were transported and by whom.

### Check Your Progress 2

1. See Sec. 32.5. Analyse that guns used were mainly matchlocks. Discuss that mostly wheel and flint locks were used. Also elaborate that the use of these techniques was quite limited.
2. See Sec. 34.4. Define both the techniques. Discuss that caulking was neither technologically superior nor cheap than the indigenous techniques that is why Indians hardly showed enthusiasms to adopt the alien technique.

### Check Your Progress 3

1. See Sec 32.8.
2. See Sec. 32.9. Discuss that Bhimji established his own press in Gujarat. He succeeded in his efforts only to a limited extent. He left the project midway.

### Check Your Progress 4

1. See Sec. 32.10. Discuss that Indians were aware of the European mechanical clocks, but they had different time-reckoning system. Elaborate it.
2. i) Salima Sultan Begum, ii) Cooling Water, iii) Window panes, chimneys, iv) Earthen



## UNIT 33 ARCHITECTURE

### Structure

- 33.0 Objectives
- 33.1 Introduction
- 33.2 Beginning of Mughal Architecture
  - 33.2.1 Buildings of Babur
  - 33.2.2 Buildings of Humayun
- 33.3 Interregnum: The Sur Architecture
- 33.4 Architecture Under Akbar
  - 33.4.1 Structural Form
  - 33.4.2 Building Projects
- 33.5 Architecture Under Jahangir and Shah Jahan
  - 33.5.1 New features
  - 33.5.2 Major Buildings
- 33.6 The Final Phase
  - 33.6.1 Buildings of Aurangzeb
  - 33.6.2 Safdar Jang's Tomb
- 33.7 Let Us Sum up
- 33.8 Key Words
- 33.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

### 33.0 OBJECTIVES

The establishment of Mughal rule in India in 1526 (Block 2) revitalised Indo-Islamic architecture. The new rulers effected an amalgam of the prevalent architectural forms and techniques with those brought from Central Asia and Persia. The result of their efforts was the emergence of one of the most splendid buildings in India.

After reading this Unit you will know about:

- new structural forms and techniques in Mughal architecture;
- major buildings of this period; and
- elements of decadence in Mughal architecture towards the close of the period.

### 33.1 INTRODUCTION

The Mughal rulers were men of acute aesthetic awareness and, as patron of art and culture, they built beautiful cities and buildings in India. The foundation of a new style of architecture in India had already been laid in the thirteenth century with the introduction of the arcuate technique where spaces were covered with domes and entrances were made with the help of arches. The Mughals carried this tradition and created a synthesis of the pre-Turkish technique, viz., trabeate with the arcuate. The final result, however, of all this blending was the emergence of a distinct style of their own.

Babur did not have enough to devote to big architectural projects. He, nevertheless, laid out several gardens in India on the pattern of his culture-area. In his memoirs (**Baburnama**) he claims credit for some pavilions also. Unfortunately very few of his buildings survive today.

Humayun, Babur's successor, was plagued by continuously eroding political authority. Within a decade of his assuming power, he was dethroned and sent into exile in Persia. The buildings dating from this period, therefore, do not show any distinctiveness. Humayun survived for only one year after his return to India in 1555. However, the impact of a long contact with the Persian culture can be seen in the designing and execution of his mausoleum under the supervision of his wife Hamida Banu Begum.

The flowering of the Mughal architecture in reality took place under Akbar. He encouraged a hybrid style, containing foreign as well as indigenous elements. Akbar particularly

appreciated the resources of the indigenous artisans and got them translated in the buildings of Fatehpur Sikri.

Akbar's son Jahangir was not a notable builder, but Jahangir's son Shah Jahan was one of the greatest patron of the building art. Some of India's finest monumental heritage dates from Shah Jahan's reign. Marble replaced red sandstone as the principal building material, and the decorative art of inlaying achieved distinction with the introduction of semiprecious stones as inlay material, called *pietra dura* (*prachin kari*). Shah Jahan also introduced the bulbous domes and convoluted arches in his buildings.

Aurangzeb's temperament did not respond to the style prevailing from his father's reign. His buildings, therefore, show a change: they are austere in both material and style.

## 33.2 BEGINNING OF MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE

The history of architecture during the 16th-18th centuries is in fact an account of the building activities of Mughal Emperors, except for a brief interregnum of a decade and a half when Surs ruled in Delhi.

It is true that the Mughal style of architecture took a concrete form during the reign of Akbar, yet the basic principles of Mughal architecture were provided by Babur and Humayun, the two predecessors of Akbar.

### 33.2.1 Buildings of Babur

Babur had a short reign of five years, most of which was spent in fighting battles for the consolidation of the newly born Mughal state. He is, however, known to have taken considerable interest in building secular works. It is unfortunate that very little of this work is extant today. The only standing structures of Babur's reign are two mosques, built in 1526, at Panipat and Sambhal. But both these structures are common place, and possess no architectural merit.

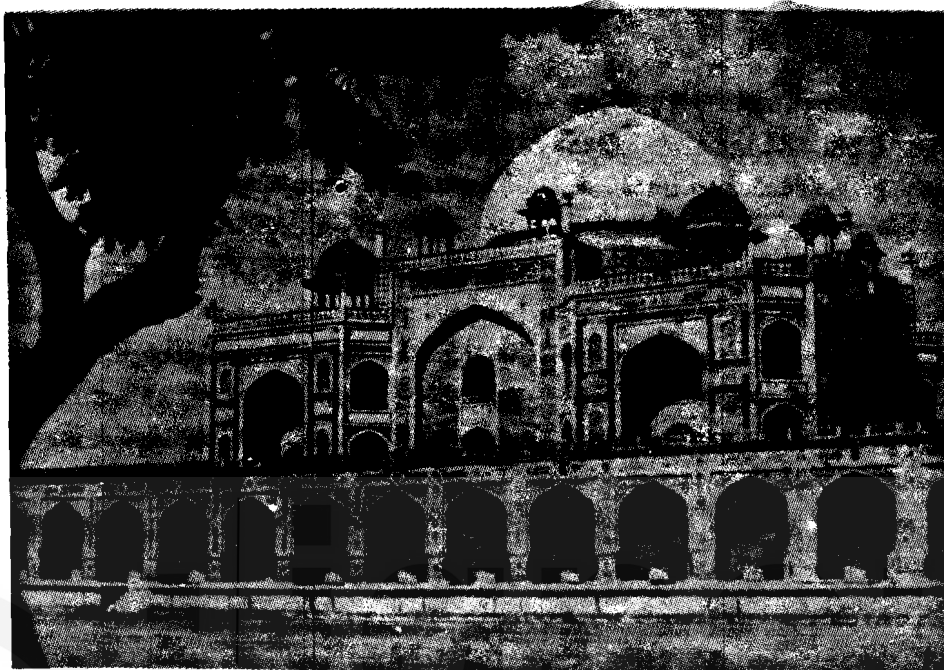
Babur's secular works mainly comprise the laying of gardens and pavilions. In one of the miniatures, he has been depicted inspecting the layout plan of a garden of Dholpur. Today, only the excavated ruins of this garden are visible. Two more gardens, Ram Bagh and Zahra Bagh at Agra, are also attributed to him. But the present layout of these gardens seems to have undergone many alterations. None of Babur's pavilions have been noticed as surviving today.

### 33.2.2 Buildings of Humayun

The surviving buildings of Humayun's reign have the same inconsequential character as that of Babur. The Mughal domination over India was too unsettled for the production of any great work of architecture. Moreover, Humayun had to spend fifteen long years of his life in exile in Persia during the ascendancy of the Sur dynasty in Delhi. However, two mosques from among several other buildings erected during the first phase of his reign survive. One of these lies in ruinous condition at Agra. The other is at Fatehabad (Hissar). But both these structures are devoid of any architectural distinctiveness much in the same manner as the mosques of Babur.

Humayun's return to Delhi in 1555 was shortlived. There are in fact no notable buildings of this time. Mention may, however, be made of Humayun's tomb as a structure which was inspired by the Persian culture imbibed by Humayun during his exile. This building is in fact a landmark in the development of the Mughal style of architecture. The construction began in 1564 after Humayun's death under the patronage of his widow, Hamida Bano Begum. The architect of the building was Mirak Mirza Ghiyas, a native of Persia. He brought many Persian craftsmen to Delhi to work on the structure and their skills and techniques were liberally employed. The tomb has thus become representative of an Indian rendition of a Persian concept. It may be noted that Humayun's tomb, strictly speaking, is a building of Akbar's reign. But because of peculiar features, it has been treated separately.

Humayun's tomb is one of the earliest specimens of the garden enclosure and is raised high on an arcaded sandstone platform. The tomb is octagonal in plan and is crowned by a high



Humayun's Tomb

dome, which is actually a double dome. It has two shells, with an appreciable space in between. The inner shell forms the vaulted ceiling to the inner chambers, and the outer shell rises like a bulb in a proportion with the elevation of the main building. To the centre of each side of the tomb is a porch with a pointed arch providing entrance to the main chamber. The interior of this building is a group of compartments, the largest in the centre containing the grave of the Emperor. The smaller ones in each angle were meant to house the graves of his family member. Each room is octagonal in plan and they are connected by diagonal passages.

A double-dome is built of two layers. There is one layer inside which provides ceiling to the interior of the building. The other layer is the outer one which crowns the building. The device of double dome enables the ceiling inside to be placed lower and in better relation to the interior space it covers. This is done without disturbing the proportions and the effect of elevation of the exterior. The method of making double dome was practised in Western Asia for quite sometime before it was imported into India.

### 33.3 INTERREGNUM: THE SUR ARCHITECTURE

The Mughal rule in India was interrupted by Sher Shah Sur in 1540. For the next fifteen years the Empire came under the sway of the Surs who embarked on profound architectural projects. Their buildings, in fact, laid the ground work on which the Mughals built.

The architectural heritage produced under diverse conditions and in two separate localities of the Surs may be divided into two separate and distinct periods. The first phase emerged at Sasaram (Bihar) under Sher Shah between 1530 and 1540. Here a group of tombs was built illustrating the final fulfilment of the Lodi-style (for details, see course EHI-03, Block 8) by

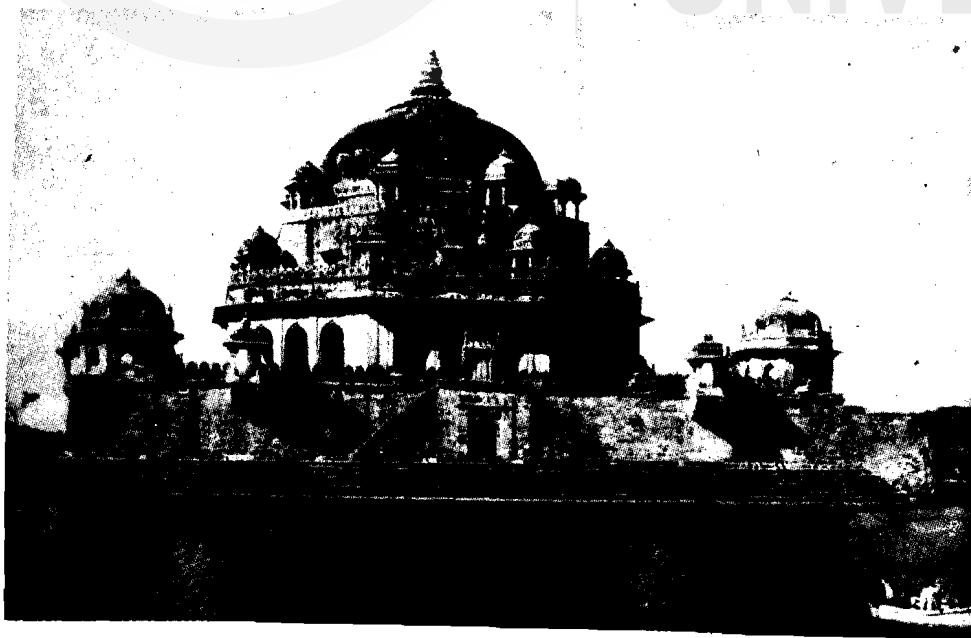
which it has been inspired. The second phase lasted from 1540 to 1545 when Sher Shah had wrested control of the Empire from Humayun. Under his patronage, several architectural innovations were adopted which got reflected in mature form in the consequent Mughal style.

The first phase is represented by a group of tombs, three belonging to the ruling family and one to Aliwal Khan who was the architect of these tombs. The buildings reflect the ambition of Sher Shah to create monuments grander than anything found in Delhi. The first project of this scheme was the construction of the tomb of Hasan Khan, Sher Shah's father, in 1525. But this was a conventional exercise in Lodi design. The major representative of this group was the tomb of Sher Shah (Sasaram), an architectural masterpiece. Here the architect considerably enlarged the normal proportions of the earlier building and set it in a beautiful tank approached by a causeway. In addition to this, he increased the number of stories thus producing a beautiful pyramidal structure in five distinct stages. This monument was constructed of the finest Chunar sandstone.

Sher Shah's tomb stands on a stepped square plinth on a terrace approached through a gateway via a bridge placed across the tank. There is an error in orienting the lower platform of the tomb on the main axis. But it is corrected by skewing the axis of the superstructure built over the lower platform. The main building comprises an octagonal chamber surrounded by an arcade. There are domed canopies in each corner of the platform. The proportions of diminishing stages and the harmonious transition from square to octagon and to sphere are elements which speak highly of the capabilities of the Indian architect.

The second phase of development took place in Delhi. Sher Shah built the **Purana Qila** intended to be the sixth city of Delhi. Today, only two isolated gateways survive. Far more important, however, was the **Qilai Kuhna Masjid**, built about 1542 inside the **Purana Qila** citadel. In the architectural scheme of this mosque, the facade of the prayer hall is divided into five arched bays, the central one larger than the others, each with an open archway recessed within it. The facade is richly carved in black and white marble and red sandstone, and the central arch is flanked by narrow, fluted pilasters. The rear carriers of the mosque have five stair turrets with rich windows carried on brackets.

One notable feature in this building is the shape of the arches — there is a slight drop, or flatness, in the curve towards the crown. It is indicative of the last stage before the development of the four-centred 'Tudor' arch of the Mughals.



Sher Shah's Tomb



Qila-i Kuhna Masjid

**Check Your Progress 1**

1. Match the following:

- |                              |                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| d i) Ram Bagh and Zahra Bagh | a) Hamida Bano Begum |
| a ii) Humayun's tomb         | b) Tomb of Sher Shah |
| b iii) Sasaram               | c) Sher Shah         |
| c iv) Purana Qila            | d) Babur             |

2. Discuss the characteristic features of Humayun's tomb in 60 words.

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### 33.4 ARCHITECTURE UNDER AKBAR

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### 33.4.1 Structural Form

The architecture of the reign of Akbar represents encouragement of the indigenous techniques and a selective use of the experiences of other countries. The chief elements of the style of architecture that evolved under Akbar's patronage can be listed thus:

- a) the buildings mainly used red sandstone as the building material;
- b) a widespread use of the trabeated construction;
- c) the arches used mainly in decorative form rather than in structural form;
- d) the dome was of the 'Lodi' type, sometimes built hollow but never technically of the true double order;
- e) the shafts of the pillars were multifaceted and the capitals of these pillars invariably took the form of bracket supports; and
- f) the decoration comprised of boldly carved or inlaid patterns complemented by brightly coloured patterns on the interiors.

### 33.4.2 Building Projects

Akbar's building projects can be divided into two main groups, each representing a different phase. The first group comprised buildings of forts and a few palaces mainly at Agra, Allahabad and Lahore. The second group related basically to the construction of his new capital at Fath-pur Sikri.

#### a) The First Phase

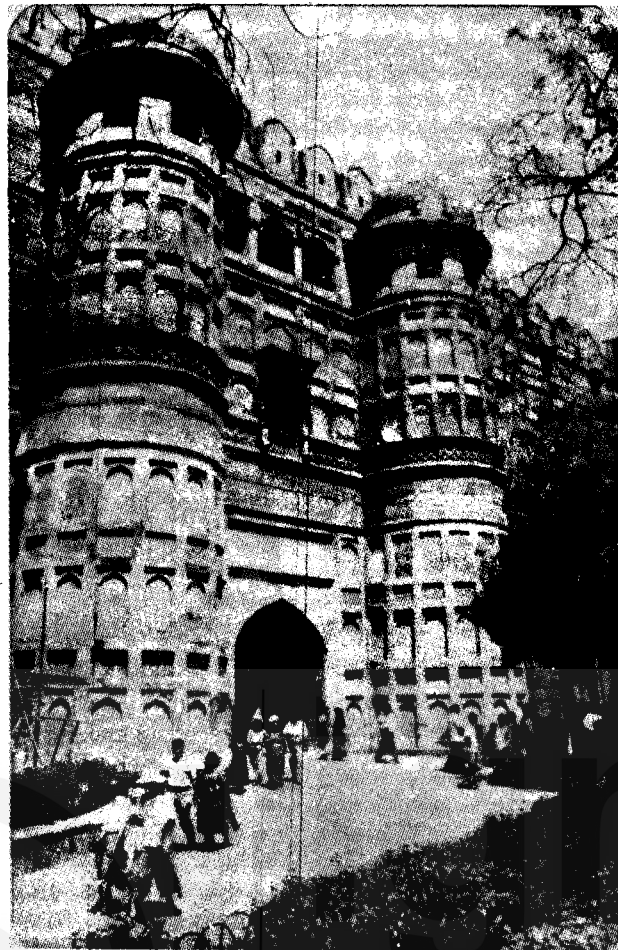
One of the earliest building projects of Akbar's reign was the construction of a fort at Agra, conceived actually as a fortress-palace. Its massive walls and battlements convey an effect of great power. Inside the fort, Akbar had built many structures in the styles of Bengal and Gujarat. Except the **Jahangiri Mahal**, however, all the other structures were demolished by Shah Jahan as part of a later phase of remodelling. Today the Delhi Gate of the fort and **Jahangiri Mahal** are the only representative buildings of Akbar's reign.

The Delhi Gate of Agra Fort probably represents Akbar's earliest architectural effort. It formed the principal entrance to the fort. The architecture of the gate shows an originality signifying the start of a new era in the building art of India. The gate follows a simple plan; the different components are:

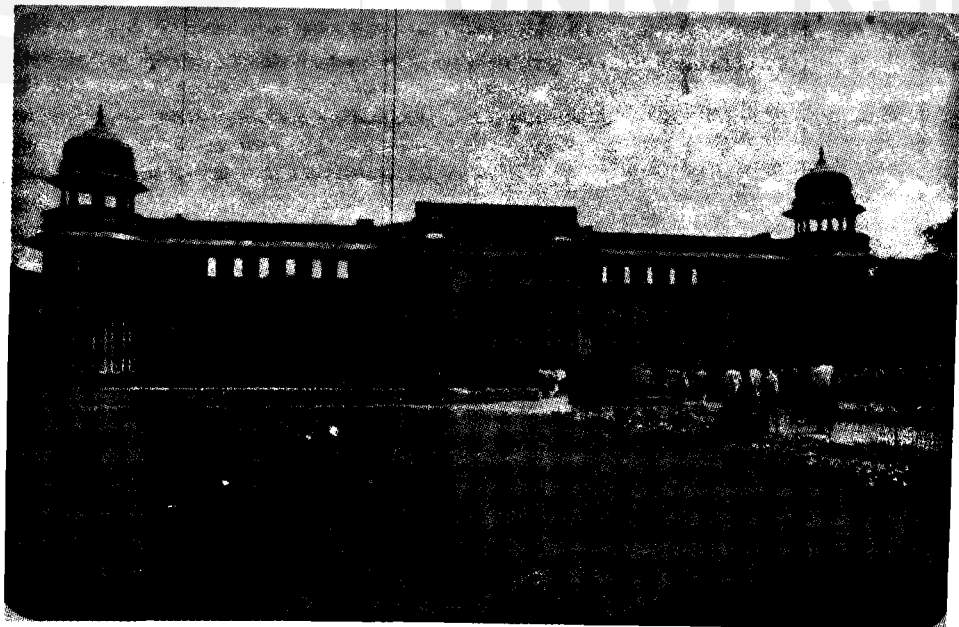
- a front consisting of two broad octagonal towers by the sides of a central archway;
- a back having arcaded terraces topped by kiosks and pinnacles; and
- an ornamentation consisting of patterns in white marble inlaid against the red sandstone background.

The **Jahangiri Mahal** was built by Akbar and is conceived as a robust building in red sandstone. It is the only surviving example in the fort of the domestic requirements of the ruler and is a fine specimen of the fusion of the Hindu and Islamic building designs. It is planned in the form of an asymmetrical range of apartments. The facade on the eastern side has an entrance gateway leading to a domed hall with elaborately carved ceiling. As one crosses this hall one reaches a central open courtyard. On the north side of this courtyard is a pillared hall with a roof supported on piers and cross-beams with serpentine brackets. The southern side, too, has a similar hall. This symmetry is, however, broken on the east side by a set of chambers that lead to a portico facing the river Yamuna. The entire construction is mainly in red sandstone with the combination of beam and bracket forming its principal structural system.

The same style is manifested in the other palace-fortresses at Lahore and Allahabad. Only the fort at Ajmer represents a different class. Since it spearheaded the advancing frontier of the Empire, the walls of the fort were thickly doubled.



**Agra Fort-Gate**



**Jahangiri Mahal**

## b) The Second Phase

The second phase of Akbar's architectural scheme coincides with the conception and creation of a ceremonial capital for the Empire at Sikri, nearly forty kilometres west of Agra. The new capital was named Fathpur.

It is one of the most remarkable monuments in India. In its design and layout Fathpur Sikri is a city where the public areas like the courtyards, **Diwan-i Am** and **Jami Masjid** form a coherent group around the private palace apartments. The city was built in a very short span of time (1571-1585) and as such does not follow any conscious overall plan. The buildings were sited to relate to each other and to their surroundings. An asymmetry seem to have been deliberately incorporated into the setting-out and design of the complex. All the buildings are in characteristic rich red sandstone, using traditional trabeate construction. The pillars, lintels, brackets, tiles and posts were cut from local rocks and assembled without the use of mortar.

The buildings in Fathpur Sikri may be resolved into two categories: religious and secular character. The religious buildings comprise (a) the **Jami Masjid**; (b) the ; **Buland Darwaza**; and (c) the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti. The buildings of secular nature are more varied and thus numerous. These can be grouped under (a) palaces; (b) administrative buildings; and (c) structures of miscellaneous order. It is a curious fact that the religious buildings are invariably built in the arcuate style while in secular buildings dominates the trabeate order.

The **Jami Masjid** uses the typical plan of a mosque — a central courtyard, arcades on three sides and domed skyline. The western side has the prayer hall with three separate enclosed sanctuaries, each surmounted by a dome and linked by arcades. The usual entrance to the masjid is from the east where stands the structure of a big gateway projected in the form of a half hexagonal porch.

In 1596, the southern gateway was replaced by Akbar with a victory gate, the **Buland Darwaza**. It is constructed in red and yellow sandstone with white marble inlay outlining the span of the arches. The loftiness of the structure is enhanced by a flight of steps on the outside. The entrance has been formed by a piercing huge central arch which is crowned by an array of domed kiosks. The **Buland-Darwaza** was built to commemorate Akbar's conquest of Gujarat in 1573.

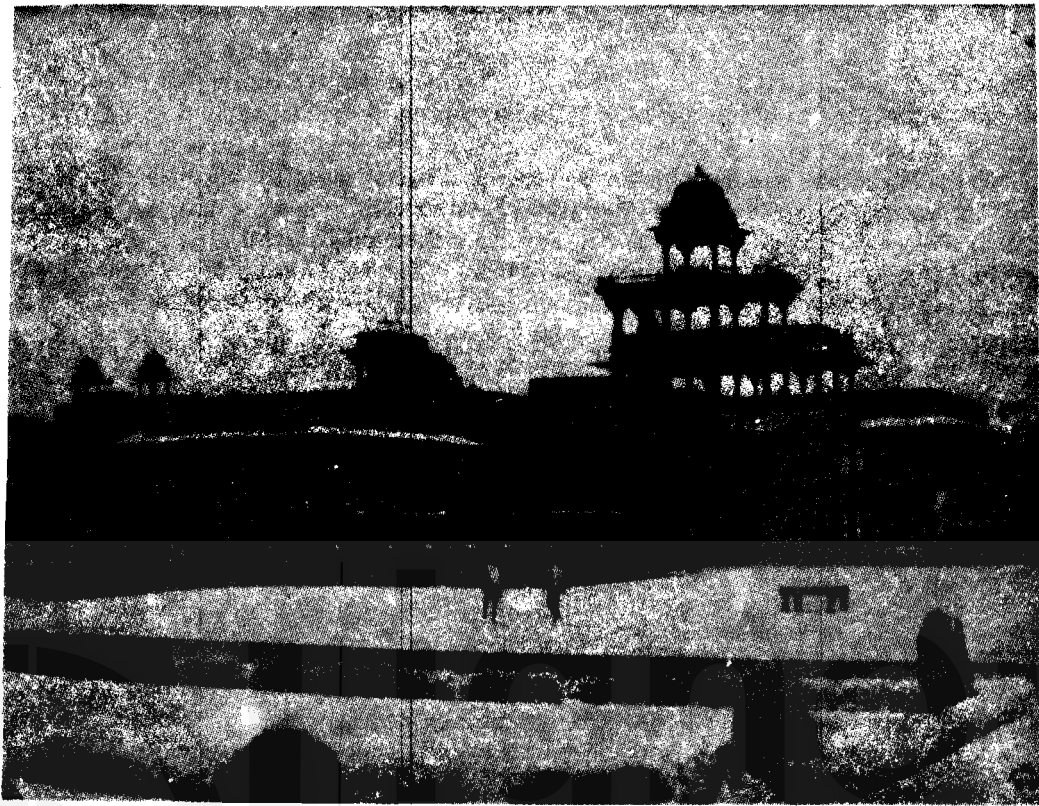
The tomb of Salim Chishti stands in the courtyard of the **Jami Masjid** in the north-western quarter. It is an architectural masterpiece as it exhibits one of the finest specimens of marble work in India. The structure was completed in 1581 and was originally faced only partly in marble. The serpentine brackets supporting the eaves and the carved lattice screens are remarkable features of this structure.

The palace complex in Fathpur Sikri comprises a number of apartments and chambers. The largest of these buildings is known as the **Jodh Bai palace**. The palace is massive and austere in character. The wall outside is plain with principal buildings attached to inner side, all facing an interior courtyard. On the north side is an arcaded passage and a balcony. There are rooms in the upper storey in the north and south wings. They have ribbed roofs covered with bright blue glazed tiles from Multan.

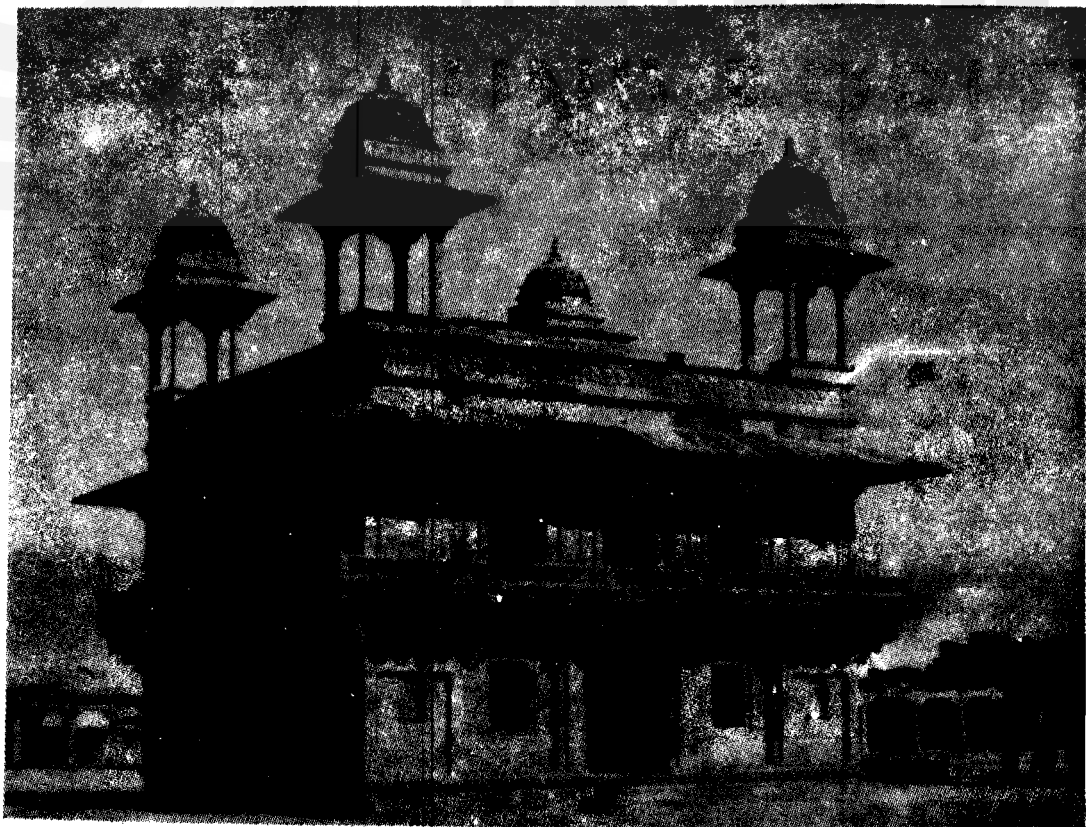
A unique building of the palace complex is the **Panch Mahal**, a five storeys structure, located south-east of the **Diwani Khas**. The size of the five storeys successively diminishes as one goes upwards. At the top is a small domed kiosk. Some of the sides in this building were originally enclosed by screens of red sandstone. But none remain intact now. An interesting feature is that the columns on which the five storeys have been raised are all dissimilar in design. Of the administrative buildings, undoubtedly the most distinctive is the **Diwani Khas**. The plan of this building is in the form of a rectangle and is in two stories from outsides. It has flat terraced roof with pillared domed kiosks rising above each corner. Inside, there is a magnificent carved column in the centre, having a huge bracket capital supporting a circular stone platform. From this platform radiate four railed 'bridges' along each diagonal of the hall to connect the galleries surrounding the upper portion of the hall. The main architectural object in this interior is the central column. The shaft is variously patterned and branches out, at the top, into a series of closely set voluted and pendulous brackets which support the central platform.



India from 16th to  
Mid 18th Century



Punch Mahal



Diwan-i Khas

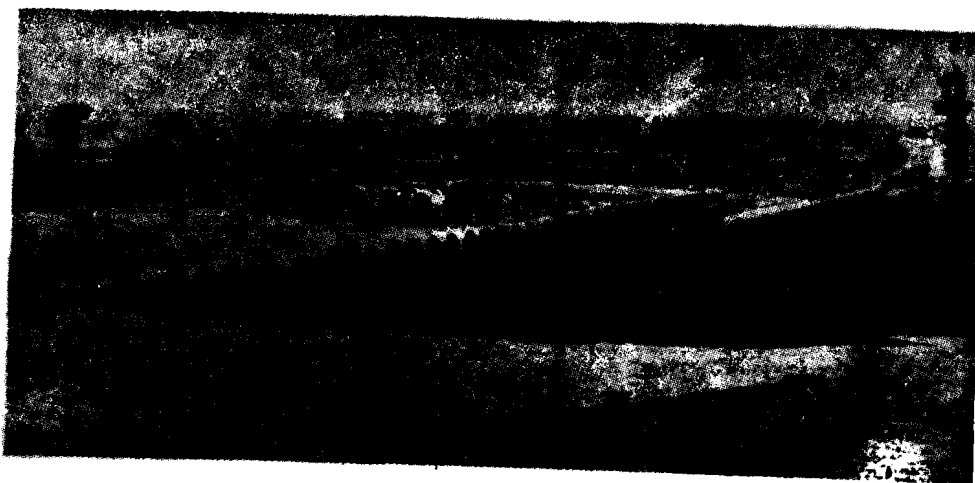
Another notable building of the same category is the **Diwani Am**. It is a spacious rectangular courtyard surrounded by colonnades. The Emperor's platform is towards the western end. It is a projecting structure with a pitched stone roof having five equal openings. The platform is in three parts, the centre probably used by the Emperor and separated from the other two sides by fine stone screens pierced with geometric patterns.

Buildings of miscellaneous character are scattered all over the city complex:

- i) Two **caravansarais**, one located inside the **Agra Gate**, immediately to the right; and the other, the larger structure, is outside the **Hathi Pol** on the left side;
- ii) **Karkhana** building located between the **Diwani Am** and **Naubat Khana**, having a series of brick domes of radiating rather than horizontal courses; and
- iii) The water-works, opposite the **caravansarai** near **Hathi Pol**, comprising a single deep **baoli** flanked by two chambers in which a device was used to raise the water for distribution in the city.



Diwan-i-Am



Caravanserai

## Check Your Progress 2

1. Tick mark right (✓) and wrong (X) against the following statements:

- i) Akbar used white marble as building material in most of his buildings.
- ii) Akbar's buildings never used double dome.
- iii) Akbar's architecture is a combination of trabeate and arcuate styles.
- iv) Akbar used corbelling to cover the spaces.

2. Write a note on the important secular buildings at Fatehpur Sikri.

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3. Name the last of the religious buildings at Fatehpur Sikri and write two lines on that.

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### 33.5 ARCHITECTURE UNDER JAHANGIR AND SHAH JAHAN

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Akbar's death in 1605 did in no way hamper the development of a distinctive Mughal architecture under his successors. A secure Empire and enormous wealth in legacy in fact permitted both Jahangir and Shah Jahan to pursue interest in the visual arts.

#### 33.5.1 New Features

In the sphere of the building art, Jahangir and Shah Jahan's reigns were an age of marble. The place of red sandstones was soon taken over by marble in its most refined form. This dictated significant stylistic changes which have been listed below:

- a) The arch adopted a distinctive form with foliated curves, usually with nine cusps;
- b) Marble arcades of engrailed arches became a common feature;
- c) The dome developed a bulbous form with stifled neck. Double domes became very common;
- d) Inlaid patterns in coloured stones became the dominant decorative form; and
- e) In the buildings, from the latter half of the Jahangir's reign, a new device of inlay decoration called **pietra dura** was adopted. In this method, semi-precious stones such as lapis lazuli, onyx, jasper, topaz and cornelian were embedded in the marble in graceful foliations.

#### 33.5.2 Major Buildings

The account of the major buildings of this period begins with a remarkable structure, that is, the tomb of Akbar, located at Sikandra, eight kilometers from the Agra on Delhi road. It was designed by Akbar himself and begun in his own lifetime but remained incomplete at the time of his death. Subsequently, it was completed by Jahangir with modifications in the original design. As it stands today, the entire complex is a curious mix of the architectural schemes of both Akbar and Jahangir.

The scheme of this complex envisages the location of tomb in the midst of an enclosed garden with gateway in the centre of each side of the enclosing wall.

The tomb building in the centre is a square structure built up in three stories. The first storey is in fact an arcaded platform making the basement. Within the platform, vaulted cells surrounded the mortuary chamber and a narrow inclined corridor in the south leads to the grave. The middle portion is in three tiers of red sandstone pavilions trabeated throughout. The top storey, of white marble in contrast to the red sandstone elsewhere, has an open court surrounded by colonnades with screens. The tomb is linked by causeways and canals to the gateways in the enclosure wall. But it is the one in the south which provides the only entrance, the other three being false gateways added for symmetry.

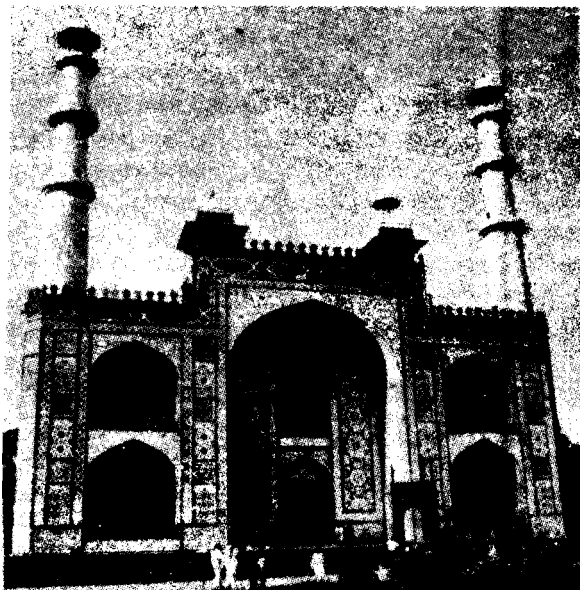
The southern gateway is a two-storey structure with circular minarets of white marble rising above the corners. The entire structure of the gateway is ornamented with painted stucco-coloured stone and marble inlay. Interestingly, the decorative motifs include, besides the traditional floral designs, arabesques and calligraphy, **gaja** (the elephant) **hamsa** (the swan) **padma** (the lotus), **swastika** and **chakra**.

The architectural importance of Akbar's tomb at Sikandra can be gauged from the fact that several mausoleums built subsequently reflect the influence of this structure to varying degree. Particular mention may be made of the tomb of Jahangir at Shahadara near Lahore and of Nur Jahan's father Mirza Ghiyas Beg at Agra.

The tomb of **Itimadud Daula**, built in 1622-8 by Nur Jahan on the grave of her father Mirza Ghiyas Beg marks a change in architectural style from Akbar to Jahangir and Shah Jahan. The transition from the robustness of Akbar's buildings to a more sensuous architecture of the later period is evident in the conception of this structure.

The tomb is a square structure raised on a low platform. There are four octagonal minarets, at each corner, with domed roofs. The central chamber is surrounded by a verandah enclosed with beautiful marble tracery. The main tomb is built in white marble and is embellished with mosaics and **pietra dura**. The central chamber contains the yellow marble tomb of Itimadud Daula and his wife. The side rooms are decorated with painted floral motifs. Four red sandstone gateways enclosing a square garden, provide a splendid foil for the white marble tomb at its centre.

It should be noted here that Jahangir was a much greater patron of the art of painting. His love of flowers and animals as reflected in the miniature painting of his period, made him a great lover of the art of laying out gardens rather than building huge monuments. Some of the famous Mughal gardens of Kashmir such as the Shalimar Bagh and the Nishat Bagh stand as testimony to Jahangir's passion.



Akbar's Tomb — Entrance



Main Building



Lal Qila

In contrast to Jahangir, his son and successor Shah Jahan, was a prolific builder. His reign was marked by a extensive architectural works in his favourite building material, the marble. Some of these were:

- a) the palace-forts, e.g, the Lal Qila at Delhi;
- b) the mosques, e.g. the Moti Masjid in the Agra Fort and the Jami Masjid at Delhi; and
- c) the garden-tombs, e.g., the Taj Mahal.

We shall describe here only the more important and representative buildings of Shah Jahan's reign.

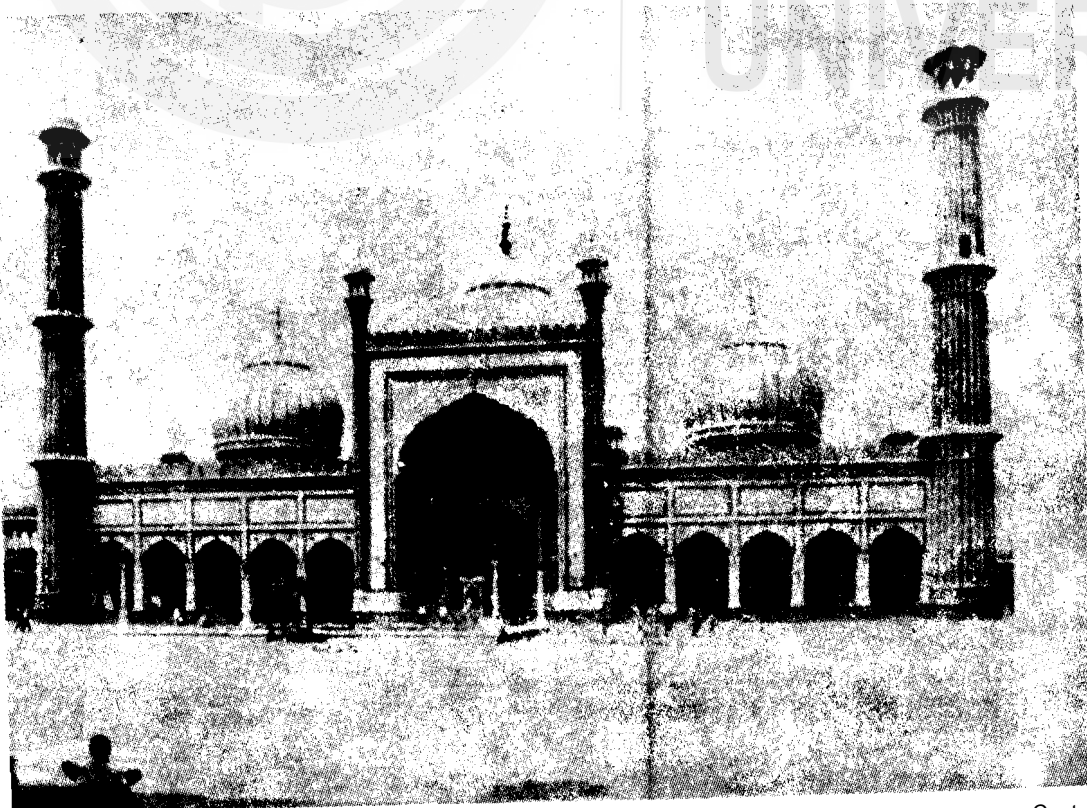
The **Lal Qila** is a regular rectangle with the north wall following the old course of the Yamuna river. There are two gate-ways — the Delhi and Lahore Gates, and massive round bastions at regular intervals along the wall. The gates are flanked by octagonal towers with blind arcades and topped by cupolas. A moat runs all along the fort wall except the river side. Inside, there are several notable buildings of which particular mention may be of **Diwani Am**, **Diwani Khas** and **Rang Mahal**. The **Diwani Am** and **Rang Mahal** are arcaded pavilions with sandstone columns in pairs, plastered with powdered marble. In the eastern wall of the **Diwani Am** is built the throne platform for the Emperor having curved corniced roof in the style of the Bengal architecture. Behind this structure on the eastern side is located the **Rang Mahal** fronted by an open courtyard. Further north, in alignment with the **Rang Mahal** is the **Diwani Khas**. All of these buildings have floral decorations on the walls, columns and piers.

In the Moti Masjid in the Agra Fort, Shah Jahan made experiment with an alternative scheme—an open arcaded prayer hall. Moreover, in this mosque the designer has also dispensed with the minarets. In their place, **chhatris** have been used on all four corners of the prayer hall. There are three bulbous domes rising over a cusped arcades. The entire building has been built in white marble with black marble calligraphy, heightening the elegance of the structure.

**Jami Masjid** at Delhi is an extended and larger version of the **Jami Masjid** at Fatehpur Sikri and thus becomes the largest building of its kind in India. It is built on a raised platform surrounded by arcades that have been left open on both sides. The main entrance is on the eastern side with an ascending flight of steps increasing the effect of loftiness. There are two smaller gateways in the middle of the northern and southern wings. Within, the mosque follows a plan similar to the **Jami Masjid** at Fatehpur Sikri—colonnades running along the three sides and sanctuary on the fourth side. Three bulbous domes in white marble rise above the sanctuary. The building material used here is red sandstone with white marble for revetments and for inlaying the frames of panels.

The Taj Mahal is undoubtedly Shah Jahan's grandest and most well known project. The construction work began in 1632, and most of it was completed by the year 1643. The plan of the complex is rectangle with high enclosure wall and a lofty entrance gateway in the middle of the southern side. There are octagonal pavilions, six in all, at the corners and one each in the eastern and western sides. The main building of the Taj stands on a high marble platform at the northern end of the enclosure. To the west of this structure is a mosque with a replica on the east side retaining the effect of symmetry.

The Taj Mahal is a square building with deep alcoved recesses in each side and its four corners bevelled to form an octagon. Above this structure rises a beautiful bulbous dome topped with an inverted lotus finial and a metallic pinnacle. At the four corners of the platform rise four circular minarets capped with pillared cupolas. The interior resolves itself into a central hall with subsidiary chambers in the angles, all connected by radiating passages. The ceiling of the main hall is a semi-circular vault forming the inner shell of the double dome. The decorative features of the building consist of calligraphy and inlay work in the exterior and **pietra dura** in the interior. Marble, the main building material, is of the finest quality brought from Makrana quarries near Jodhpur. The garden in front of the main structure is divided into four quadrants with two canals running across, forming the quadrants. The cenotaph in the main hall was enclosed originally with a screen in golden tracery. But it was later replaced by Aurangzeb with a marble screen.





Taj Mahal

**Check Your Progress 3**

1. Mark right (✓) and wrong (X) against the following statements:

The characteristic feature of Jahangir and Shah Jahan's architecture is:

- i) red sandstone is replaced by marble as building material.
- ii) use of multi-foliated curves in arches.
- iii) double dome replaced by the single one.
- iv) inlay work is replaced by fine carvings and geometrical designs.
- v) introduction of **pietra dura**.

2. Write a note on the architecture of the Taj Mahal in about 60 words.

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**33.6 THE FINAL PHASE**

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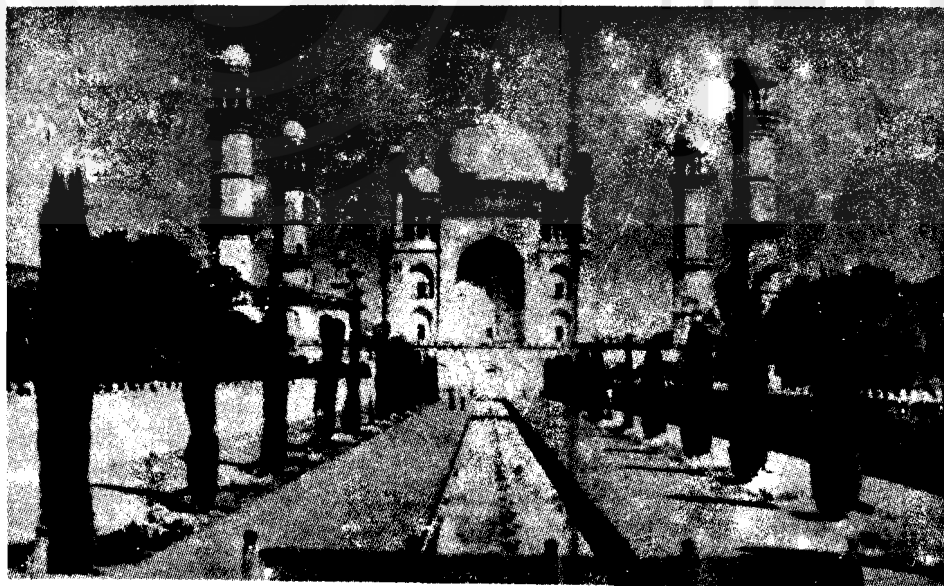
This section is divided into the two sub-sections. The first one deals with the building activities of Aurangzeb reign; the second tells us about the buildings of the post-Aurangzeb period.

### 5.6.1 Buildings of Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb had none of his father's passion for architecture. Under him, the generous encouragement given by his predecessors to the arts was almost withdrawn. The architectural works during the reign of Aurangzeb were less numerous and of a lower standard than those executed under any previous Mughal ruler. In Delhi itself, the capital city of the Empire, very few buildings are associated with his name. The major buildings include the mausoleum of his wife **Rabia ud Dauran** in Aurangabad, the **Badshahi Masjid** in Lahore and the **Moti Masjid** at Lal Qila, Delhi. The **Badshahi Masjid** is comparable to the Delhi one in size and architectural composition. It has a vast court, a free standing prayer hall and minarets at each corner of the hall. There are four smaller minarets at each angle of the sanctuary. The cloisters run on the both sides with arched entrances at regular intervals. There is only one portal. The building material is red sandstone with the use of white marble as a relief to the red sandstone. Atop the prayer hall, three bulbous domes in white marble rise beautifully.

The other important building of this period is the **Moti Masjid** in the Lal Qila, Delhi. The marble used in its construction is of a very fine quality. The plan is similar to the **Moti Masjid** built by **Shah Jahan** in Agra fort; only the curves are more prominent. The three bulbous domes cover the prayer hall which is designed in the form of three cupolas in the same alignment.

The mausoleum of his wife at Aurangabad, is an attempt at emulating the **Taj Mahal**. But a serious miscalculation on the part of Aurangzeb's architects in providing the corners of the mausoleum, too, with minarets upsets the harmony of the entire building. These minarets, which are superfluous in the overall scheme of the building, are the only major deviation in copy from the original scheme of the **Taj Mahal**.



**Rabi ud Dauran's Mausoleum**



### 33.6.2 The Safdar Jang's Tomb

After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the collapse of the Empire was only a matter of time. The few buildings that were built during the first half of the eighteenth century amply testify the decadent conditions that ensued.

The Safdar Jang's tomb at Delhi is the most important building of this period. It is located amidst a large garden and copies the plan of the Taj Mahal in the same manner as was done in the Rabia ud Dauran's tomb. One major change in the design, however, is that the minarets rise as an adjunct to the main building and not as independent structures. The main building stands on an arcaded platform. It is double storeyed and is covered by a large and almost spherical dome. The minarets rise as turrets and are topped by domed kiosks. The building is in red sandstone with marble panelling. The cusps of the arches are less curved, but synchronise well with the overall dimensions of the building.



Safdar Jang's Tomb

#### Check Your Progress 4

1. Discuss the architectural activities during Aurangzeb's reign.

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2. Write a note on the Safdar Jang's tomb.

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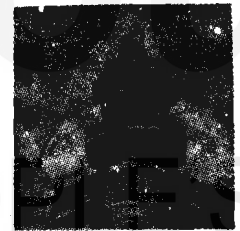
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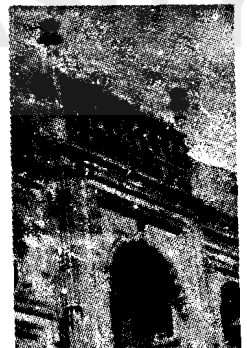
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### 33.7 LET US SUM UP

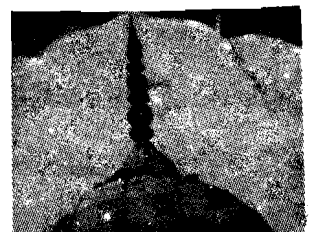
Babur and Humayun were too busy to tackle the political problems to pay much attention to the building activities. However, Babur himself was a deep lover of gardens and he laid out a number of gardens in India during the short span of his reign. The main Mughal architectural activities took place under Akbar. His buildings are mostly of red sandstone. Akbar's buildings show a fine blend of trabeate and arcuate forms. Jahangir was more interested in paintings rather than architecture. However, his interest in paintings, animals and floral designs affected the contemporary architecture as well and a new decorative style—**pietra-dura** was introduced during his reign. During Shah Jahan's reign the Mughal architecture reached its zenith with the predominant use of marble. Shah Jahan immortalised the Taj Mahal, a pure white marble structure. Its double domes, minarets, multi-foliated arches, etc.,—all speak of the perfection and the climax. His successor, Aurangzeb, had little time for building activities, and very few buildings were, therefore, constructed during his reign. The post-Aurangzeb's period can also be termed as period of decline. Owing to disturbed political scenario later, the Mughal Emperors could hardly pay any attention to huge building projects. The only monument of note that can be identified is the Safdar Jang's tomb at Delhi.



Kiosk/Cupola



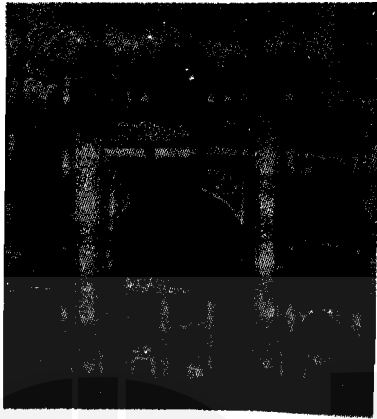
Turrets



### 33.8 KEYWORDS

Alcove	:	a vaulted recess
Arcade	:	a range of rooted arches
Arch	:	a self-supporting structure made of bricks or of stone blocks and capable of carrying a superimposed load over an opening
Baoli	:	Step-well
Bay	:	deep recess
Bevel	:	a sloping surface
Bracket	:	a support projecting from a wall
Cenotaph	:	commemorative building
Convolute arch	:	An arch that is cusped inside.
Colonnade	:	a row of columns
Causeways	:	passage across water
Cupola	:	a domical roof over a polygonal space.
Dome	:	a convex roof built over a square; Octagonal or circular space in building
Eaves	:	slight projection of roof
Engrailed arches	:	foliated arch
Facade	:	a course of bricks or stones projecting from a wall as a continuous structure.
Finial	:	the top of a pinnacle
Kiosk	:	an open pavilion having roof supported by pillars
Pier	:	a mass of stone or brick which supports a vertical load
Pietra Dura	:	an ornamental mosaic of lapis lazuli, marble etc.

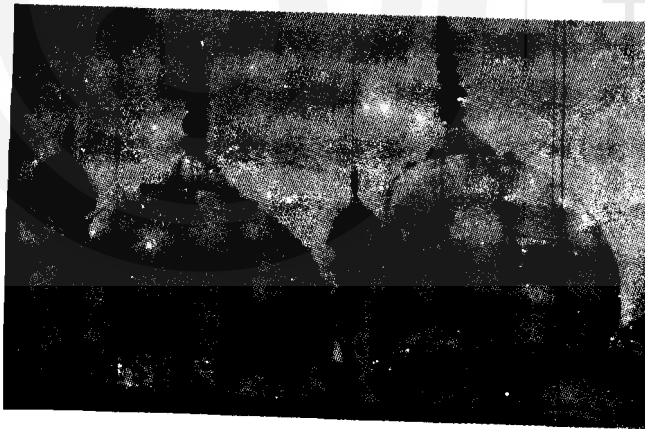
- Post** : long timber supporting vertical thrust of some part of a building
- Portal** : frontage
- Reventments** : supportive joints
- Stucco** : ornamentation done by carving lime plaster
- Trabeate** : an architectural form in which the main openings are made by beams supported on pillars
- Turrets** : side minarets attached with the building.



**Facade**



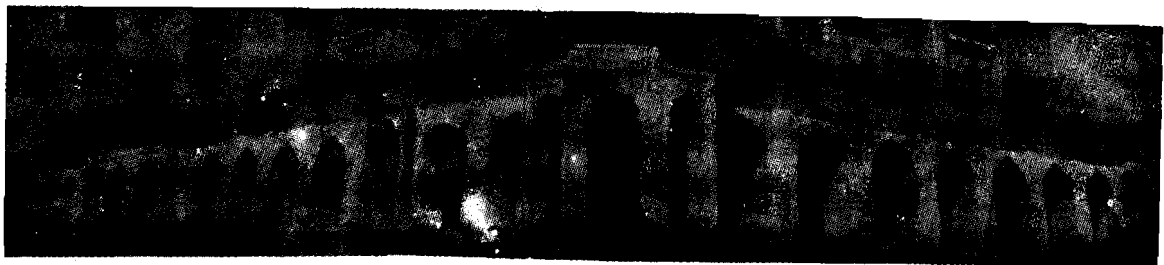
**Akbari Arch**



**Dome/s**



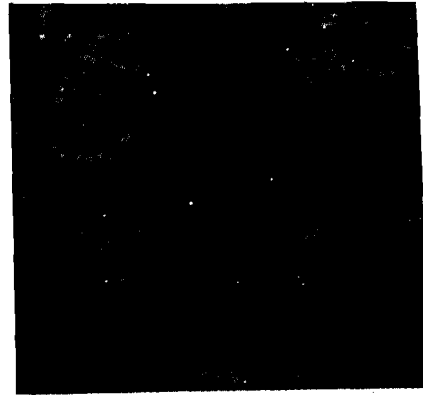
**Engrailed Arch (Shahjahan)**



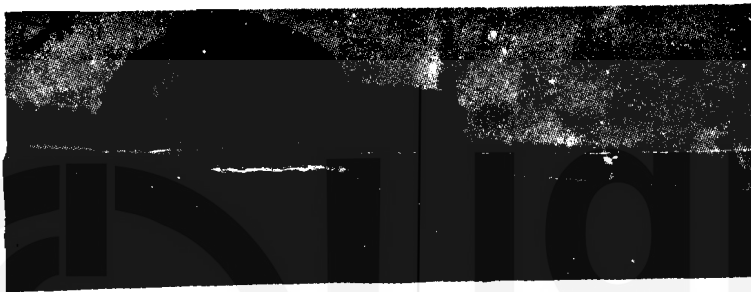
**Colonnade/Arcade**



**Bracket/s**



**Alcove**



**Eaves on Brackets**

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## **33.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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### **Check Your Progress 1**

1. i) d ii) a iii) b iv) c
2. See Sub-sec. 33.2.2

### **Check Your Progress 2**

1. i) x ii)  $\checkmark$  iii)  $\checkmark$  iv) X
2. See Sub-sec 33.4.2. Discuss the general characteristic features of Akbar's building at Fathpur Sikri—the style adopted, building material used, decoration, carving etc.
3. See Sub-sec. 33.4.2

### **Check Your Progress 3**

1. i)  $\checkmark$  ii)  $\checkmark$  iii) X iv) X v)  $\checkmark$
2. See Sub-sec. 33.5.2.

### **Check Your Progress 4**

1. See Sub-sec. 33.6.1. Discuss that Aurangzeb was hardly interested in the building activities and very few buildings were constructed during his reign. Describe these buildings and their characteristic features.
2. See Sub-sec. 33.6.2.

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## UNIT 34 PAINTING AND FINE ARTS

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### Structure

- 34.0 Objectives
- 34.1 Introduction
- 34.2 Antecedents
  - 34.2.1 Painting in the 15th Century
  - 34.2.2 Painting under Early Mughlas
- 34.3 Evolution of Mughal School under Akbar
  - 34.3.1 Establishment of Royal Atelier
  - 34.3.2 Style and Technique
  - 34.3.3 Distinctive Features
- 34.4 Development under Jahangir and Shahjahan
  - 34.4.1 Introduction of New Styles
  - 34.4.2 Thematic Variation
  - 34.4.3 Final Phase
- 34.5 European Impact on Mughal Painting
- 34.6 Painting in the Deccan
  - 34.6.1 Court Patronage
  - 34.6.2 Style and Theme
- 34.7 Rajput Painting
  - 34.7.1 Style and Theme
  - 34.7.2 Main Centres
- 34.8 Fine Arts under Mughals
  - 34.8.1 Music
  - 34.8.2 Dance and Drama
- 34.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 34.10 Key Words
- 34.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 34.0 OBJECTIVES

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Cultural values are often reflected through the medium of paintings and fine arts. After going through this Unit, you will be able to know the following:

- the development of painting during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries;
- the various styles and techniques of painting;
- the thematic variations in the paintings in different regions, and
- the development of fine arts viz., music, dance and theatrical arts in the courts of the Mughals and other regional kingdoms:

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### 34.1 INTRODUCTION

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The sixteenth century, especially its second half, marks a watershed in the development of the art of painting and music in India. Akbar gave liberal patronage to the growth of fine arts during his rule. His successors also showed great interest in these arts, so that by the end of the seventeenth century painting and music in the Mughal court reached unparalleled height.

Simultaneously, in the Deccan, was evolving another great tradition of painting and music somewhat independent of the Mughal influence. Later, in the eighteenth century, the patronage to painting shifted from the Mughal court to regional kingdoms, such as Rajasthan and Punjab.

In the following pages you will read details of the emergence of these various traditions of painting along with the growth of other fine arts.

## 34.2 ANTECEDENTS

In this section we will discuss the development of painting in the pre-Mughal period.

### 34.2.1 Painting in the Fifteenth Century

Until recently it was believed that the art of painting did not flourish during the rule of the Delhi Sultans and that the illuminated manuscripts of the Mughals were, in fact, a revival of painting after a lapse of several centuries from the end of the tenth. Lately, however, enough evidence has come to light suggesting the existence of:

- a lively tradition of murals and painted cloth during the 13th and 14th centuries;
- a simultaneous tradition of the Qur'anic calligraphy, lasting upto the end of the 14th century, and
- a tradition of illustrated Persian and Awadhi manuscripts, originating probably at the beginning of the 15th century.

Of this last tradition, a notable number of illustrated manuscripts from the period between the 15th and 16th century have become known. Some of these works were commissioned by independent patrons in the Sultanate located outside the court. From the former category mention may be made of:

- a) the *Bostan* of S'adi, illustrated by the artist Hajji Mahmud, and
- b) *Ni'mat Nama* (a book on cookery)
- c) *Miftah al Fuzala* by Muhammed Shadiabadi

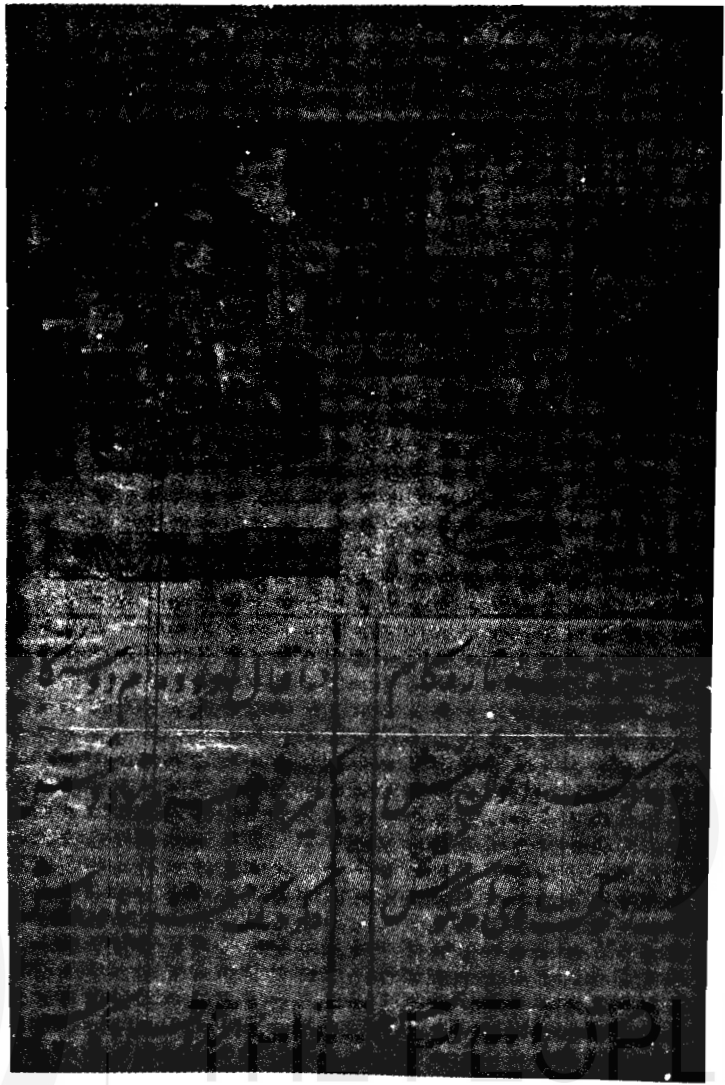
These manuscripts were illustrated at Mandu (Malwa) during the second half of the fifteenth century. A fine example of the latter category is the illustrated manuscript of *Laur Chanda* (in Awadhi) executed for a patron seemingly not related with the court.

It is, thus, evident that at the time of the advent of the Mughals in India, there did exist a live tradition of painting focused mainly on illuminating manuscripts, made possible by the use of paper as the new material.

### 34.2.2 Painting Under Early Mughals

Babur, the founder of Mughal rule in India (in 1526), ruled for four years only. He was not able to contribute anything to the growth of painting. His successor Humayun was mostly engaged in containing his rivals till he was forced out of India by Sher Shah in 1540. It was, however, during his refuge at the court of Shah Tahmasp of Persia that Humayun acquired love of the art of painting. Humayun was so influenced by the art practiced there that he commissioned Mir Syed Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad, two Persian masters, to illustrate manuscripts for him. These two painters joined Humayun's entourage on his triumphant return to India.

Humayun's contribution to the evolution of Mughal painting is very important. There are several important features of the Mughal school which seem to have originated in the paintings done during Humayun's period. An important painting from Humayun's period is titled 'Princes of the House of Timur' and dated c. 1550. It has been executed on cloth, quite large in size, measuring approximately 1.15m. square. Such a large format is unusual even for paintings in Persia, and it has been suggested that it probably relates to the Mongol tradition of having paintings in their tents.



Bostan of Sa'adi



Nimat Nama

## 34.3 EVOLUTION OF MUGHAL SCHOOL UNDER AKBAR

The emergence of the Mughal School of painting as distinct from all other styles was mainly due to the deep interest Akbar took in the promotion of this art.

### Akbar's views on The Art of Painting

Drawing the likeness of anything is called *tasvir*. His majesty, from his earliest youth, has shown a great predilection for this art, and gives it every encouragement, as he looks upon it as a means, both of study and amusement. Hence the art flourishes, and many painters have obtained great reputation. The works of all painters are weekly laid before His Majesty by the Daroghas and the clerks; he then confers rewards according to excellence of workmanship, or increases the monthly salaries. Much progress was made in the commodities required for painters, and the correct prices of such articles were carefully ascertained. The mixture of colours has especially been improved. The pictures thus received a hitherto unknown finish. Most excellent painters are now to be found, and masterpieces, worthy of a Bihzad, may be placed at the side of the wonderful works of the European painters who have attained world-wide fame. The minuteness in detail, the general finish, the boldness of execution, etc., now observed in pictures, are incomparable; even inanimate objects look as if they had life. More than a hundred painters have become famous masters of the art, whilst the number of those who approach perfection, or of those who are middling, is very large. This is especially true of the Hindus; their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few, indeed, in the whole world are found equal to them.

—Ain Akbari

### 34.3.1 Establishment of Royal Atelier

The first major project undertaken during Akbar's regime was that of illustrating the *Hamza Nama*. It began in 1562 for which several artists were employed at the court.

The place where the painters worked was known as *Tasvir Khana*. Although Abul Fazal enumerates the names of only seventeen artists, we now know that the number was very large. S.P. Verma (*Art, Material Culture in the Paintings of Akbar's Court*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1978) has prepared a list of 225 artists who worked at Akbar's atelier. These artists belonged to different places, but among them the majority were Hindus. Interestingly, several low caste people, due primarily to their artistic skill, were also raised to the status of royal artist. The case of Daswant, who was the son of a Kahar (palki-bearer), may be especially cited. The painters were assisted by a set of gilders, line-drawers and pagers. The artists were salaried employees. S.P. Verma opines that the lowest paid worker in the atelier received an amount between 600 to 1200 dams. (40 dams = one rupaya).

There are paintings which bear the names of two artists. Sometimes even three artists worked on a single painting. On one painting from *Akbarnama* four artists have worked. The painting was thus a collaborative team work. The sketching of figures and colouring were done by a team of two different artists. In cases where three artists have worked the outlining was done by one artist, the other artist coloured the faces and a third one coloured the remaining figure. It is however not known to us as to how was such a complex arrangement worked out. Probably in such a team work the sketching and colouring were done by separate artists. (Cf. S.P. Verma, *op. cit.*)

As has been noted above, the atelier was supervised by daroghas with the assistance of clerks. They were responsible for making materials of painting easily available to the artists and to oversee the progress of their work. They also arranged for periodical presentation of the artists' works before the Emperor.

### 34.3.2 Style and Technique

The illustration done at Akbar's court are considered as representative works of the Mughal art. Notably, however, in these paintings, there is evident a gradual evolution in the style



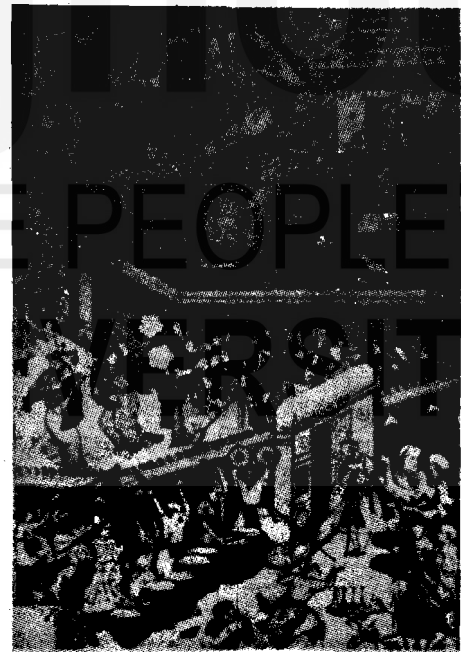
and technique. The illustrations of the early phase are clearly influenced by the Persian tradition, the identifying features of which are listed below:

- symmetrical compositions;
- restricted movement of figures;
- fineness of the lines of drawings;
- flat depiction of architectural columns; and
- profuse embellishment of buildings in the manner of jewels.

Later, the paintings acquired a distinctive character of their own. They assumed a more eclectic character composed mainly of the Persian and Indian traditions with touches of European influence.



Tuti Nama



Tarikh -i Khanda-i Timuriya



Babur Nama

### 3.3 Distinctive Features

The Mughal style became recognisable within a span of fifteen years since the setting up of royal atelier under Akbar. In the next decade or so, i.e. by about 1590 it acquired a distinctive form which was marked by:

- naturalism & rhythm
- clothing objects of daily use assuming Indian forms.
- picture space having subsidiary scenes set in background
- extraordinary vigor of action and violent movement
- luxuriant depiction of foliage & brilliant blossoms

It should be emphasized here that the identity of the Mughal paintings under Akbar was as much made of an original style as a fusion of the Persian and Indian traditions. Specific mention may be made here of the depiction of action and movement which is not to be found in either the pre-Mughal art of India or the art of Persia. (S.P. Verma in Art & Culture, eds. A.J. Qaiser & S.P. Verma, Jaipur, 1993).

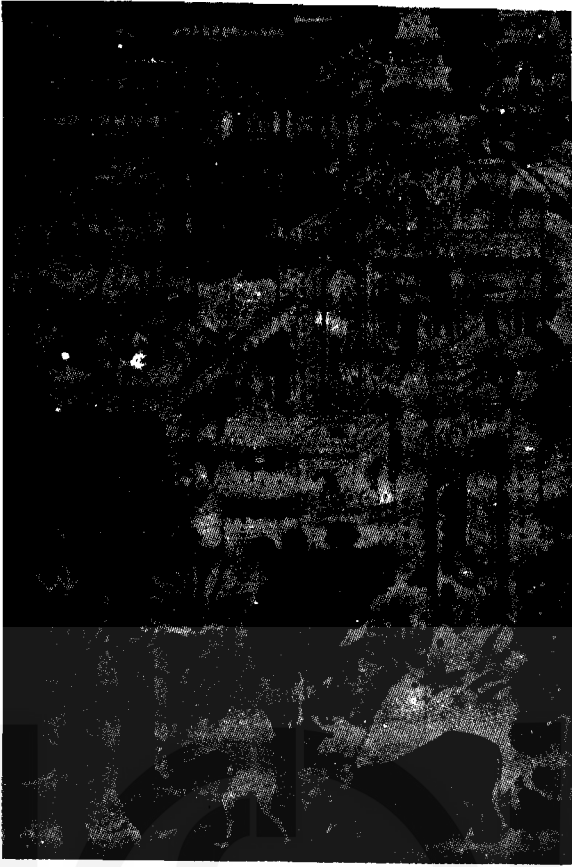
Painting under Akbar's period distinguishes itself as a tradition from Persian painting as well as from Indian styles particularly by the presence of historical subject matter. The two most commonly used themes are:

- daily events of the court, and
- portraits of leading personalities

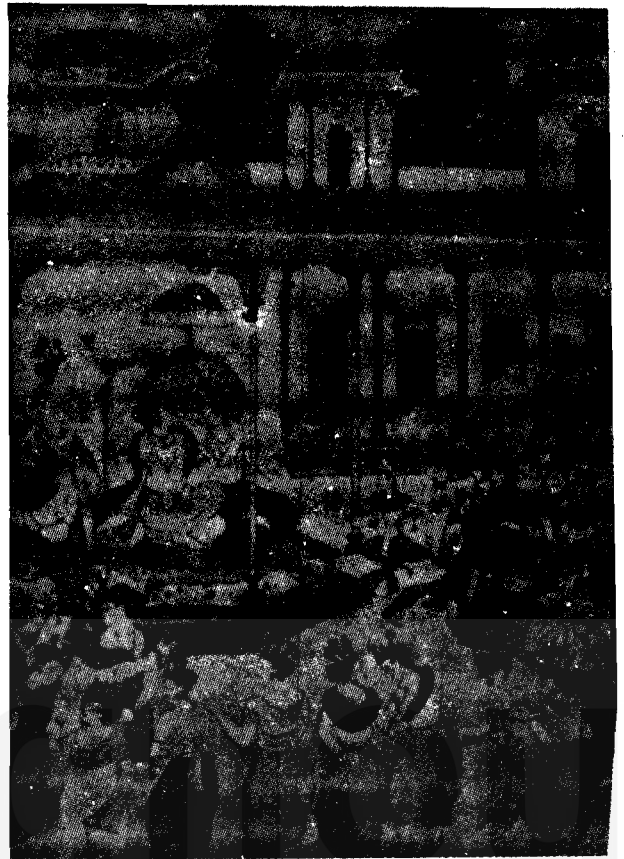
While portrait painting was known in Persia, painting as a chronicle of actual events was certainly a new emphasis. Painters used familiar formulas for hunting or battle scenes regardless of the fact that the literary reference for the scene was historical or purely imaginary. Moreover specific events illustrated are frequently reworkings of scenes 'recording' quite different events in the earliest known historical manuscript of this period, the Timur Nama of about 1580 A.D. Possibly, painters conceived scenes according to a repertoire of types e.g. the seize of a fortress, crossing a river, an audience or battle scene. In the working of whole volumes such as the Akbar Nama, the artists seem to have reworked or adapted these compositional types. Painters usually created new compositions only when no prototypes existed, and only a few artists were capable of such invention.

We have listed below, in chronological order famous illustrated manuscripts of this period

Manuscript	Date
Hamzanama	c. 1562-1580
Anwar-i Suhaili	1570
Tutinama	c. 1570-1580
Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriya	c. 1570-1590
Baburnama	c. 1570-1590
Akbarnama	c. 1570-1600
Tarikh-i Alfi	c. 1570-1600
Razmnama	1582



**Razm Nama : Dwaraka**



**Razm Nama : Pandava Const**



**Akbar Nama : Akbar Inspecting the Building**

1) Write a note of 50 words on the art of painting under early Mughals.

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2) How did the concept of teamwork operate in the Royal Atelier?

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3) List four distinctive features of Mughal School of painting.

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### 34.4 DEVELOPMENTS UNDER JAHANGIR AND SHAHJAHAN

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During Jahangir and Shahjahan, Mughal painting achieved its zenith. Jahangir took a deep interest in painting even as a prince. He maintained his own studio apart from Akbar's large atelier. Jahangir's preference was for paintings of hunting scenes, birds and flowers. He also continued the tradition of portraiture. Under Shahjahan the colours of the paintings became more decorative and gold was more frequently used for embellishment. In the following sub-sections, we shall study the introduction of new styles and thematic variations in Mughal paintings during Jahangir & Shahjahan's reign.

#### 34.4.1 Introduction of New Styles

In the period of Jahangir's rule (1605-27), manuscripts became less important than individual pictures. Milo Cleveland Beach (*Mughal and Rajput Painting*, Cambridge University Press, 1992) is of the opinion that Jahangir, with his personal involvement, may have functioned effectively as the head of the royal studio. Therefore, artistic decisions were made by the Emperor himself consequently introducing his own stylistic preferences in the paintings. Two important new elements in the style of Mughal painting during the first half of the seventeenth century have been identified as below:

- Jahangir's paintings seem to accentuate a formalist style, i.e., making the work realistic and preferring the precise recording of contemporary reality.
- The paintings of this period have broad margins which are gorgeously decorated with the depiction of flora and faces of human figures, etc. designs from plant motifs.



Portraits of Jahangir



Portraits of Shah Jahan



Nature Painting : Zebras by Mansur

### 34.4.2 Thematic Variations

Jahangir was a keen naturalist. Whenever he came across a strange animal or bird, his artists painted the same immediately. We have paintings of birds and animals in the most realistic fashion.

Shah Jahan was a great patron of architecture, but he did not neglect the painting. Under him, the previous tradition of doing portraits, preparing albums, and, illustrating books, was continued. Additionally we find the paintings depicting charming love scenes and portraits of female members. Another important theme chosen for painting was super imposition of animals and the scenes of performing acrobats.

### 34.4.3 Final Phase

Aurangzeb, who succeeded Shahjahan, had begun his rule on a bitter note by executing his brothers and imprisoning his father. The arts were ignored during his regime. Painting did not stop altogether, though it lost the patronage of the Emperor and became confined to the studios of the nobles. There exist some commissioned portraits of the nobles and their relations from the courts of the Rajput principalities. Large number of karkhana records (on paintings) are located in the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner. There also exist a few interesting pictures of the emperor himself during his campaigns. The skill of the painters is evident, though the paintings are more formal and seem to have lost their earlier liveliness.

Later, under Muhammed Shah (1719-48), interest got renewed in depicting pleasure loving scenes. But by this time many of the painters of imperial studio had begun migrating to provincial courts. The loss of the Mughals, thus, was the gain of the provincial styles.

### 34.5 EUROPEAN IMPACT ON MUGHAL PAINTING

The eclectic nature of the Mughal School of Painting has been discussed in the Unit earlier. In its later phases, especially during the Seventeenth Century, the Mughal painting was influenced by the European art. Some of the themes of European art were incorporated by Mughal painters and they also adopted a few of the techniques of European artists. According to A.J. Qaisar a large number of European paintings were either copied or adapted or even reinterpreted, sometimes, by Mughal painters. At the same time many original prints from Europe were collected and preserved in the albums of Jahangir and Dara Shikoh and several Mughal nobles. (A.J. Qaisar, *Indian Response to European Technology & Culture*, Oxford, 1982).

The contact Mughal court painters had with European paintings prompted them initially to make exact copies in their own hands. Such imitations, as noted by contemporary European travellers, were impeccably done. But Mughal painters also made experiments by making new paintings on the subjects chosen from European paintings.



**European Impact**

One important feature that becomes noticeable in some Mughal paintings is the attempt to make them three dimensional. Clearly it speaks of the impact of European technique. Another European convention acceptable to Mughal painters was the effect of light and shade, mostly utilized in fight scenes. The depiction of motifs like 'hals', winged angles and roaring clouds in Mughal paintings was again under the influence of European paintings. One important technique that of oil painting from Europe, somewhat did not attract the Mughals. There is no work from this period that was executed in oil.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) What important thematic variations became noticeable in Mughal painting in the seventeenth Century?

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2) Name two members of Mughal ruling class who made collections of European paintings in their albums.

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3) Which European motifs were incorporated by Mughal painters?

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**34.6 PAINTING IN THE DECCAN**

A distinct style of painting emerged in the kingdoms of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda in the Deccan in the late 15th century and predates the Mughal painting. But the greatest patronage to painting in these kingdoms was given in the sixteenth century and the Deccani style reached its zenith in the seventeenth century under the impact of the Mughal tradition. Here we shall trace the developments in the Deccan painting during the 16th-17th centuries.

**34.6.1 Court Patronage**

The successor states of the Bahmani Kingdom actively patronised painting. The earliest known painting from these states is dated between 1565-69. It is an illustrated manuscript of **Ta'rif-i Husain Shahi** composed and illustrated at Ahmadnagar. About 1570, a second Deccani manuscript was composed and illustrated, this time at Bijapur. This was the **Nujum-ul-Ulum**. In all probability this work was commissioned by Ali Adil Shah who had several painters working at his court. But the greatest of the Bijapur line, and perhaps of all the rulers of the successor states, was Ibrahim Adil Shah (1580-1627) who was an accomplished painter and a calligraphist. Towards the close of the 16th century, there had emerged a new tradition of painting in Ahmadnagar and Bijapur, known as the **Ragamala** painting. Under Ibrahim's patronage this tradition reached the highest point of its growth.

There is another category of paintings in the Deccan style which depict the pomp and grandeur of the royal processions. Several paintings of this type have come down to us from the reign of Abdulla Qutb Shah (1626-72) of Golkonda.

In the 18th Century patronage of painting in the Deccan passed to the Asaf Jahi dynasty of Hyderabad. The painting of Azam Shah returning from bird-shooting and approaching his pleasure garden at the foot of the Golconda fort, and the album of Himmatyar Khan, a noble of the Nizam's court, are some of important surviving examples of the Deccani painting from Hyderabad.

### 34.6.2 Style and Themes

Numerous influences seem to have affected the formation of the Deccani tradition. Many of the rulers of Deccan kingdoms were connoisseurs of Persian painting and built up good collections of miniatures and manuscripts. The influence of the Persian tradition is thus evident in the paintings done at their courts. It should, however, be noted that this assimilation is not precise and disciplined. Consequently, many of the features have been taken over without the refinement of the Persian paintings. Another significant influence on the Deccan paintings is that of the Mughal school. Contacts between Deccani and Mughal traditions developed in many ways. There were exchanges of artists between the two courts as also gifts of paintings.

But the Deccan paintings cannot be analysed primarily on the basis of various derivative influences. The best specimens of Deccan paintings creatively reshape extraneous suggestions and become aesthetically original. Thus the features typical of Deccan paintings are:

- hierarchical scaling, i.e., the principal figure being bigger than the subordinate figures;
- richness of the palette, in which white and gold are used as they are in no other Indian miniatures;
- typical jewelry, e.g., plaque of the necklace;
- exaggerated swirl of the girdle and stole, especially in the case of feminine figures, and
- intersection of diagonals so as to form an arch around the principal figures.



Ragmala Paintings: A) Todi Ragini : Deccan Style  
B) Bhairav Ragini : Woman Worshipping

## 34.7 RAJASTHANI PAINTING

The Rajasthani paintings have a distinct aesthetic quality. The emergence of this style, in the opinion of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, from the earlier pre-Turkish traditions reached its consummation around 1600. In its early phase, it showed a great vigour, though it absorbed Mughal influence later. After the collapse of the Mughal power, it reemerged and flourished under the patronage of different Rajput kingdoms. In the following sub-sections we shall discuss the main style and themes of the Rajasthani schools as also the main centres where the art flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries.



### 34.7.1 Style and Themes

Rajasthani painting, since its beginning, adopted nature as the main theme. The illustrations are almost like landscape paintings where human figures seem to play only subordinate roles. Some of the main elements of nature depicted in these paintings are:

- a variety of tree forms;
- a dense foliage;
- singing birds and frolicking animals;
- rivers full of lotus blossoms; and
- drops of rain falling from deep blue clouds.

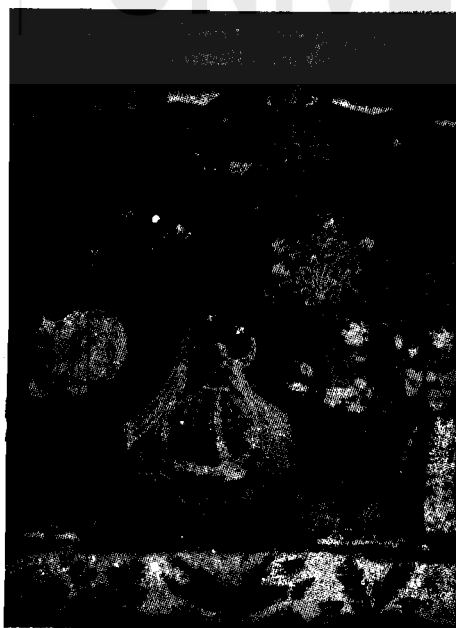
The Rajasthani miniatures are also known for the intensity of colours used. Deep blue for clouds, streaks of gold showing flashes of lightening, and emerald green for foliage are some of the most prominently used colours. The major themes selected by painters of this genre are:

- hunting scenes;
- portraits, and
- musical seasons.

Another characteristic of the Rajasthani paintings, particularly of the 17th century, is the use of compartmental pictures in which space is divided into bents and rectangles and used as frames for figures and groups.

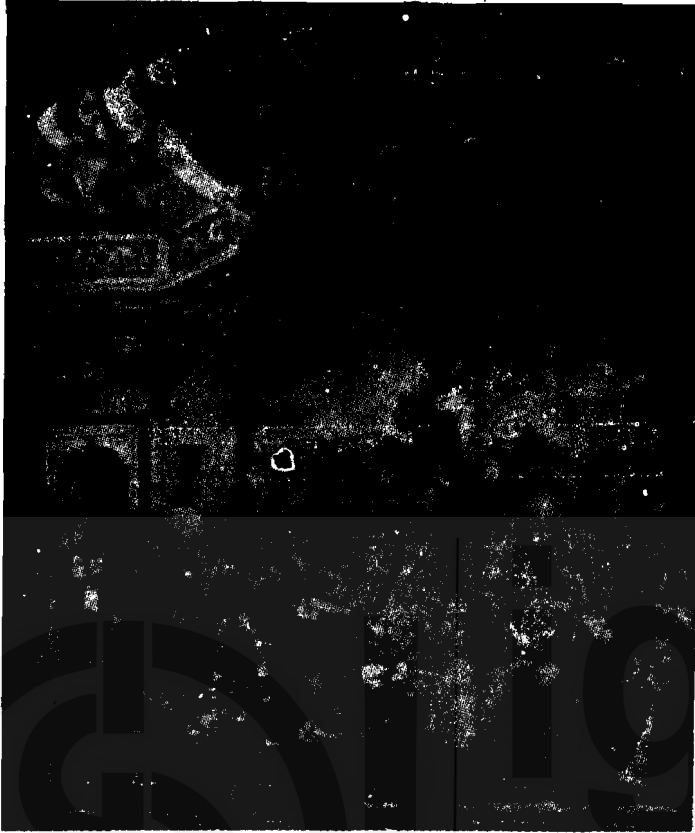
### 34.7.2 Main Centres

(a) **Mewar School:** The house of Nisar Din (1606) stands out as the earliest known group of Rajasthani painters. Subsequently the same tradition was carried further by Sahib Din, who worked from 1627 to 1648. This phase represents the Mewar School at its height. The illustrated series ran into hundreds covering a very wide range of life, including mythology. Under the patronage of Jagat Sing I (1628-52), a long series of illustrations called **Nayakabheda** was executed by a number of painters in a poetic and sentimental style. However, in the subsequent half-a-century period, the influence of the Mughal style gradually weakened the vitality of the Mewar school, and it gradually became more and more subdued.



**Mewar School**

b) **Bundi School:** It has an almost parallel history, except that there seem to have been two important periods in it, viz., 1620-35 and 1680-1700. During the 18th century, the Bundi school took a new turn. While retaining its originality of expression, it followed the Mughal school in subject-matter and technical details, The main emphasis now was on the display of feminine grace in which it seemed to excel.



**Bundi School**

(c) **Kishangarh School:** The Kishangarh style was lyrical and sometimes sensuous. It was encouraged by Maharaja Sawant Singh, popularly known as Nagari Das at the turn of the 18th century (1699-1764). Although Mughal secular influence in painting affected every court in Rajasthan, in Kishangarh deep Hindu devotionalism seems to have survived. Under Sawant Singh's patronage, there was a spurt in the art of painting based on the love-lore of Radha and Krishna. The Kishangarh paintings are mostly the work of the talented artist Nihal Chand. The elegant forms of the Kishangarh females, with their sharp noses, almond eyes and arched mouths, set up a new tradition in Rajasthani painting.



**Kishangarh School**

## 34.8 FINE ARTS

Fine arts during the 16th-18th century seem to have developed more in the regional kingdoms than in the Mughal state. However, historical information on the development of fine arts is scanty, and the following narrative is based on piecemeal records.

### 34.8.1 Music

Centres of musical study and practice, as stated above, were located in regional kingdoms. In the South, a system of parent and derivative modes, i.e., **Janaka** and **Janya ragas**, existed around the middle of the 16th century. The earliest treatise which deals with this system is titled **Swaramela Kalanidhi**. It was written by Ramamatya of Kondavidu (Andhra Pradesh) in 1550. It describes 20 **janak** and 64 **janya ragas**. Later, in 1609, one Somanatha wrote **Ragavibodha** in which he incorporated some concepts of the North Indian style. It was sometimes in the middle of the 17th century that a famous treatise on music, called **Caturdandi-prakasika** was composed by Venkatamakhin in Thanjavur (c. 1650). The system propounded in the text has come to form the bedrock of the Carnatic system of music.

The development of music in North India was largely inspired and sustained by the *bhakti* movement. The compositions of the 16th and 17th century saint poets were invariably set to music. In Vrindavan, Swami Haridas promoted music in a big way. He is also considered to be the teacher of the famous Tansen of Akbar's court. Tansen himself is considered one of the great exponents of North Indian system of music. He is given credit for introducing some famous *ragas* viz., **Miyan ki Malhar**, **Miyan ki Todi** and **Darbari**. Raja Mansingh of Gwalior (1486-1517) played a distinguished part in the growth and perfection of Dhrupad, a variant style of the North Indian music.

In the 18th century, music in North Indian style received great encouragement at the court of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. Sadaranga and Adaranga were two great composers of **Khayal gayaki** at his court. Several new forms of music such as **Tarana**, **Dadra** and **Ghazal** also came into existence at this time. Moreover, some folk forms of music were also incorporated in the courtly music. In this category mention may be made of **Thumri**, employing folk scales, and to **Tappa** developed from the songs of camel drivers of Punjab.

In passing, it should be noted that while in the South the texts of music enforced a stricter science, in the North the absence of texts permitted greater liberty. There were thus several experiments in mixing the *ragas* carried out in the North. A loose code of North Indian style of music is a feature that has continued to the present day.

### 34.8.2 Dance and Drama

Evidence on dance and drama in the medieval period is scattered. The more important sources are the texts on music, dance and drama, and the creative works of literature in the different languages of India.

The textual material is mainly from Orissa, South India and from the court of the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah. **Abhinaya Chandrika** by Mahesvara Mahapatra and **Sangit Damodara** by Raghunatha are the two 17th century texts on dance and drama from Orissa. From South India we have **Adi Bharatam**, **Bharatarnava**, Tulajaraja's (1729-1735) **Natyavedagama** and Balaravarman's (1753-1798) **Balaramabharatam**. There is the **Sangita Malika** treatise on dance and music from the court of Muhammad Shah.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Write a note of 50 words on the main themes shown in Deccan paintings.

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2) Write three elements of nature depicted in Rajasthani paintings.

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3) Give names of two main centres of patronage of Rajput paintings.

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### 34.9 LET US SUM UP

We have seen how painting and fine arts came to prosper under the Mughals. The keyword in the development of these arts during this period was eclecticism. Painting assimilated indigenous traditions as well as from Persia. In the seventeenth century another significant influence, that from Europe, made an impact on Mughal paintings.

Music and dance, and the theatrical arts were the other subjects that received royal patronage. Tansen adorned the court of Akbar and propelled music to unprecedented heights. In comparison dance and theatre remained only at the initial stages of development.

### 34.10 KEYWORDS

<b>Accentuate</b>	:	intensify
<b>Atelier</b>	:	workshop or studio of artists
<b>Calligraphy</b>	:	The art of decorative writing
<b>Embellish</b>	:	beautify
<b>Gilder</b>	:	artist working with golden colour
<b>Mural</b>	:	wall painting
<b>Palette</b>	:	flat board used by painter to arrange and mix colours for painting
<b>Portrait</b>	:	painting of the face or bust
<b>Sketch</b>	:	line drawing
<b>Theatre</b>	:	drama

### 34.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

#### Check Your Progress 1

1. See Sub-sec. 34.2.2.
2. See Sub-sec. 34.3.1.
3. See Sub-sec. 34.3.3.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1. See Sub-sec. 34.4.2.
2. Jahangir and Dara Shikoh. See Sec. 34.5.
3. Halo, Winged Angels and Roaring Clouds. See Sec. 34.5.

**Check Your Progress 3**

1. See Sub-sec. 34.6.2.
2. See Sub-sec. 34.7.1.
3. E.g. Mewar and Bundi. See Sub-sec. 34.7.2.

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**SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK**

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A.L. Basham (ed.)	:	<b>Cultural History of India</b>
K.A. Nilkanth Sastry	:	<b>History of South India</b>
K.M. Jhaveri	:	<b>Milestones in Gujarati Literature,</b>
	:	<b>History of Marathi Literature, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi</b>
Percy Brown	:	<b>Indian Architecture (Islamic Period)</b>
Percy Brown	:	<b>Indian Paintings</b>
M.C. Beach	:	<b>Mughal Architecture</b>
M.C. Beach	:	<b>Mughal and Rajput Paintings</b>
S.P. Verma	:	<b>Art and Material Culture in the Paintings of Akbar's Court</b>
A.J. Qaisar	:	<b>Indian Response to European Technology</b>



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# UNIT 35 DECLINE OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

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## Structure

### 35.0 Objectives

### 35.1 Introduction

### 35.2 Empire-Centric Approach

#### 35.2.1 Jagirdari Crisis

#### 35.2.2 Agrarian Crisis

#### 35.2.3 Re-examination of 'Crisis'

### 35.3 Region-Centric Approach

#### 35.3.1 Centre-Region Relationship

#### 35.3.2 Contours of Regional Polities

#### 35.3.3 An Overview

### 35.4 Let Us Sum Up

### 35.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 35.0 OBJECTIVES

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The objective of this Unit is to provide you with an overview of the problem of the decline of the Mughal Empire. We have aimed at giving you

- information on the different views expressed by scholars on the problem of the decline of the Mughal Empire, and
- a comparative assessment of the evidence garnered in support of these varying views.

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## 35.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Mughal Empire held sway over a large part of India for nearly three centuries, but a drastic decline in its power and prestige came about by the first half of the eighteenth century. Not only did the political boundaries of the Empire shrink, the decline also saw the collapse of the administrative structure so assiduously built by rulers like Akbar and Shah Jahan. In the wake of the collapse of the Mughal power a number of Independent principalities emerged in all parts of the Empire.

However, the processes of the decline and the emergence of regional polities have been intensely debated among historians. It has also been a subject on which scholarly opinion is more sharply divided than on any other aspect of Mughal history.

The historiographical perspective on the Mughal decline can be divided into two broad sections. First, the Mughal-centric approach, i.e., historians attempt to identify the causes of the decline within the structure and functioning of the Empire itself. Secondly, the region-centric approach where the perspective goes out of the precincts of the Empire into the regions to look for the causes of turmoil or instability in different parts of the Empire.

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## 35.2 EMPIRE-CENTRIC APPROACH

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The Empire-centric approach for explaining Mughal decline has progressed through different stages. Initially, theories focused on the individual rulers and their policies. William Irvine and Jadunath Sarkar wrote the first detailed histories of this period (W. Irvine, *The Later Moghuls*, reprint, New Delhi, 1971; Jadunath Sarkar, *The Fall of Mughal Empire, I*, Calcutta, 1938; *History of Aurangzeb, I-V*, Calcutta 1912, 1916, 1919 and 1924). They attributed the decline to a deterioration in the characters of the Emperors and their nobles. Sarkar had analyzed the developments of this period in the context of law and order. He, therefore, held

Aurangzeb as the arch culprit. According to Sarkar, Aurangzeb was a religious fanatic. He discriminated against sections of the nobles and officials on the basis of religion. This led to widescale resentment among the nobility. He argued that Aurangzeb's successors and their nobles were mere shadows of their predecessors and were thus unable to set right the evils of Aurangzeb's legacy.

### 35.2.1 Jagirdari Crisis

In 1959 the publication of Satish Chandra's *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-40* (Delhi, 1982, 3rd edition) marked the first serious attempt to study the structure of the Mughal Empire. Both its functioning and its plans were examined to understand the nature of the Empire and the reasons for its subsequent decline. Satish Chandra studied the working of certain key institutions of the Empire. The two institutions he scrutinised were *mansabdari* and the *jagirdari*. The nobles in the Mughal Empire were the core state officials. They were given ranks corresponding to their status in the Mughal official hierarchy. These ranks were called *mansab*. Each holder of a *mansab*, called *mansabdar*, was paid in assignments of land revenue (*jagir*). Among the various obligations, the *mansabdar* had to maintain a requisite contingent of troopers. These troopers were paid and maintained out of the revenue of the *jagir*. They formed the base of the *mansabdar's* power, and assisted him in the collection of land revenue. Availability of the revenues to be assigned and the ability of the Mughals to collect them thus became two crucial pre-requisites for an effective working of the system. According to Chandra, Mughal decline has to be seen in the Mughal failure, towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign, to maintain the system of the *mansabdar-jagirdar*. As this system went into disarray, the Empire was bound to collapse.

Athar Ali's work on nobility and their politics in the late seventeenth century appeared in 1966 (M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Bombay, 1966 reprint, 1970). In this work the problems attending the annexation of the Deccan states, the absorption of the Marathas and Deccanis into the Mughal nobility, and the subsequent shortage of *jagirs* have been emphasized. The sudden increase in the number of nobles, caused due to the expansion of the Empire into the Deccan and Maratha territory, created a crisis in the functioning of the *jagir* system. According to Athar Ali, the nobles competed for better *jagirs*, which were increasingly becoming rare due to the influx of nobles from the south. The logical consequence was the erosion in the political structure which was based on *jagirdari* to a large extent.

In an important paper published in 1969, S. Nurul Hassan puts forward the argument that the agrarian relations as they developed during the Mughal rule gave rise to an authority structure which worked like a pyramid. In this form the rights of various kinds came to be superimposed upon each other. As a result bulk of the revenue demand of the state was transferred on to the cultivators. In the eighteenth century, with the decline of the Mughal authority, and with pressure on *jagirs*, agricultural economy began to face a crisis.

The *zamindars* as a class, were quite loyal to the state. But in the kind of agrarian situation that obtained in the Mughal empire, conflict between them and the state as also among themselves could not be checked. This often resulted in law and order problems and decimated the authority of the state. After the death of Aurangzeb and weakening of the imperial authority this equilibrium got disturbed. The *zamindars* in this situation could be contained only by a group which would be independent of the support of the *zamindars*. Since such a class had not emerged by this time, the pattern of agrarian relations could not be changed. The collapse of the system became inevitable. (S. Nurul Hassan, "Zamindars Under the Mughals", *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, ed. R.E. Frykenberg, Madison, 1969.)

### 35.2.2 Agrarian Crisis

After the pioneering work of Satish Chandra, historians continued to address themselves to various aspects of the functioning of the Empire in order to identify the reasons for its political collapse. The focus had evidently shifted from

personalities and policies of individual rulers to larger and broader developments that were weakening the very structure on which the Mughal edifice had been built. Irfan Habib attempted an in-depth analysis of the collapse of the Empire in his seminal work. (*The Agrarian System of Mughal India, New Delhi, 1963.*) According to Habib, the mechanism of collection of revenue that the Mughals had evolved was inherently flawed. The imperial policy was to set the revenue at the highest rate possible to secure the greatest military strength for the Empire, the nobles. On the other hand, tended to squeeze the maximum from their jagirs, even if it ruined the peasantry and destroyed the revenue paying capacity of the area. Since, the nobles' jagirs were liable to be transferred frequently, they did not find it necessary to follow a far-sighted policy of agricultural development. As the burden on the peasantry increased, they were often deprived of their very means of survival. In reaction to this excessive exploitation of the peasantry, the latter had no option but to protest. The forms of rural protest in Medieval India were varied in nature. In many areas the peasants took to flight. Entire villages were left deserted due to the large scale migration of peasants to the towns or other villages. Very often the peasants protested against the state by refusing to pay the revenue and were up in arms against the Mughals. Habib argued that these peasant protests weakened the political and social fabric of the Empire.

### 35.2.3 Re-examination of 'Crisis'

J.F. Richards, M.N. Pearson and P. Hardy also give a pivotal position to the Mughal involvement in the Deccan and the affairs of the Marathas in their explanation of the decline of the Empire. (*Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. XXXV No.2, Feb, 1976, pp. 221-63.* However, they differ from the Aligarh historians in their understanding of the nature of the Empire. For instance, according to Pearson, Mughal rule was indirect. It was not state control but local ties and norms which governed the lives of people. It was only for the nobles that the concept of the Mughal Empire outweighed other "primordial attachments". The nobles were bound to the Empire only by patronage, which depended on the "constant military success" of the Emperor. Pearson emphasizes the absence of an impersonalised bureaucracy, and its not too optimistic consequences for the Mughal state. Once Mughal patronage slackened due to the lack of any further military expansion, and, a shortage of fertile areas to be allotted as jagirs arose, the "personalised bureaucracy" of the Mughal Empire showed signs of distress. This indeed sounded the death-knell for the Mughal system.

In the 1970s, J. F. Richards added a new dimension to the theories of Mughal decline which looked at *bejagiri* (the absence of *jagirs*) as a major cause of the decline of the Mughal Empire. Using archival material from Golkonda, Richards questioned the long held belief that the Deccan was a deficit area which generated *bejagiri* leading to the Mughal decline.

According to Richards, the *jagirdari* crisis was of an administrative and managerial nature. He argued that the augmentation of the revenue resources of the Empire following the annexation of the Deccan states roughly kept pace with the expansion of the nobility during the second half of Aurangzeb's reign. The lack of *pal baqi* land was due to a deliberate decision on Aurangzeb's part to keep the most lucrative *jagirs* under *khalsa* in order to provide for a continued campaigning in the Karnataka and against the Marathas. Thus, the crisis was an administrative one and not caused by *bejagiri*.

In the 1980s, Satish Chandra's researches resolved the problem of *bejagiri* to some extent. He made use of newly discovered archival sources to make a clear distinction between *bejagiri* and the crisis in *jagirdari*. In his opinion, the crisis of the *jagir* system did not occur because of the growth in the size of the ruling class and the corresponding decline in the revenues earmarked to be assigned in *jagir*. In fact, *jagir* system was in crisis because of its non-functionality. According to Satish Chandra, it is important to understand the structure of the Medieval Indian society before one can talk about the background of the non-functionality of *jagirdari*.

A tripolar relationship between the peasants, the *zamindars* and the *mansabdar/jagirdar* formed the base on which the Mughal edifice rested. The ability of the



**mansabdar/jagirdar** to collect land revenue from the **zamindars** and keep the **rai'vat** engaged in agricultural production was the key to successful working of the **jagir** system. The **jagirdar** could perform his functions properly if he could maintain his military might. This of course was based on his ability to muster enough revenue and resources from his **jagir** in order to maintain the requisite contingent of troopers. Any factor which could disturb this neat balancing of **jagirdar-zamindar-peasant** parameter would ultimately cause the decline of the Empire.

Satish Chandra argues that in the 17th century the social conflicts which the **Mughals** were unable to resolve within the broad framework of the class alliance forged by them, were reflected in financial crisis and in the crisis of the **jagir** system, the two being interrelated. The crisis of the **jagir** system had made its appearance fairly early in the history of the Empire. The problem re-surfaced under **Jahangir** and **Shah Jahan** when the Empire had expanded to fringe areas beyond the fertile tracts of the **Ganga-Yamuna doab**. Towards the end of **Shah Jahan** reign, the difference between **jama** (assessed revenue) and **hasil** (revenue actually collected) in **jagir** lands became too glaring. A **mansabdar** was lucky if the realisation from his **jagir** was more than five-monthly (i.e., revenue equivalent to five months' revenue only in a year). The number of **sawars** he maintained had to be reduced proportionally. In **Deccan**, the realisation was even less—about three-monthly, and the power and influence of the **jagirdar** proportionally lower. Once the military power of the **jagirdar** was eroded, the tripolar relationship which sustained the Empire fell apart.

According to Satish Chandra, perhaps the only manner in which the crisis of the **jagirdari** system could have been deferred for a longer period was a rapid development of the economy, both in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Trade was a supplementary source of income for rulers and nobles. Indeed what we need to know is whether the money saved by the nobles was used for investment in trade on a regular basis, or was trade made to yield money for the ostentatious living of the nobles? Some regional studies of traders and politics in **Mughal India** suggest that as a class, on an all India basis, the merchants were not rich or powerful enough to claim a share in state power. Trade and politics, by and large, remained segregated in **Mughal India**.

Developments in the agricultural sector were no less different. For a number of reasons, the state policies were aimed at preserving the small peasant economy. Thus, the **khud-kasht** (the rich peasants) were not allowed to cultivate their lands with the help of hired labour, or to extend their cultivation at the expense of the land held by **pahis** (middle level peasants who did not own land and moved with their implements of production from village to village). Some of the rich peasants used their wealth to lend money on interest, or mortgaged the lands of the poor peasants, reducing them to the position of share croppers. Thus, the only lines on which they could grow was to become intermediary **zamindars** or **mahajans** (grain dealers-cum-money-lenders). This perhaps explains the slow development of the agricultural economy, and its inability to avoid a precipitation of the **jagirdari** crisis. Satish Chandra further argues that the fundamental basis for the **jagirdari** crisis was the medieval social system which limited agricultural growth. The administrative system was reared on this structure, the two acting and reacting on each other. All the other factors like the growth in the size of the ruling class, the growing ostentatious life style of the nobles which limited the surplus available for expanding production and resulted in slow economic growth were contributory factors to the growth of the crisis.

(Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: Society, the Jagirdari Crisis and the Village*. Delhi, 1982).

The **Mughal** decline has also been explained in terms of participation in the eighteenth century politics of groups conventionally regarded as non-political. **Karen Leonard** argues that "indigenous banking firms were indispensable allies of the **Mughal State**", and that the great nobles "were more than likely to be directly dependent upon these firms". When in the period 1650-1750 these banking firms began "the redirection of their economic and political support" towards regional

and rulers, including the English East India Company in Bengal, this led to bankruptcy, a series of political crises and the down fall of the Empire (Karen Leonard, 'The "Great Firm" Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 21 No. 2, April, 1979, pp. 161-7).

The assumptions of Leonard conclusions do not get adequate support from the existing studies of Mughal polity and economy. Philip Calkins and M.N. Pearson, researching on Bengal and Gujarat respectively, give some evidence of merchants, participation in politics (Philip C Calkins, 'The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal', *Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol. XXIX No. 4, Aug, 1970; M. N. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat*, California, 1976). However, Pearson refrains from suggesting that the Mughal finance system was dependent on merchants' credit. Calkins also limits his generalisation to the period and the region he examines. Leonard's source material is the same as that used by Calkins and Pearson. However, Leonard's conclusions remain unconvincing because no fresh evidence has been adduced.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What is the core argument in jagirdari crisis as the cause of Mughal decline?  
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- 2) Write four sentences on 'agrarian crisis'.  
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- 3) Summarise J. F. Richards' main argument on jagirdari crisis in four sentences.  
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## 35.3 REGION-CENTRIC APPROACH

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Muzaffar Alam and Chetan Singh have used in their works region-centric approach to explain Mughal decline (M. Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1748*, New Delhi, 1986; Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire. Punjab in the Seventeenth Century*, New Delhi, 1991). While Muzaffar Alam has made comparative study of the developments in the Mughal Subas of Awadh and Punjab, Chetan Singh has made an in-depth study of the regional history of the 17th century Punjab.

Their studies are significant in that they throw new light on both the nature of the Mughal Empire as well as the process of its weakening and eventual decline in the 17th and early 18th century.

### 35.3.1 Centre-Region Relationship

Viewing the Mughal State from the perspective of the regional literature of the Mughal suba of Awadh, Alam suggests that the Mughal Empire signified a co-ordinating agency between conflicting communities and the various indigenous

socio-political systems at different levels. The basis of the Empire in a measure had been negative; its strength lay in the inability of the local communities and their systems to mobilize beyond relatively narrow bounds. Political integration in Mughal India was, up to a point, inherently flawed. It was to a large extent conditional on the co-ordination of the interests and the political activities of the various social groups led by local magnates.

This, in turn, was dependent on the latter realizing that they could not amass fortunes by themselves. For it was very evident that the nobles were dependent for their position and power directly on the Emperor who appointed them. They had no hereditary estates to consolidate or bequeath to their descendants. Their resources were scrutinized and regulated by the Empire. They were in a way representatives of the Mughal Emperor. Yet the nobility also had its tensions. The policy of jagir transfer, by checking the noble's ambition to build a personal base, was meant to strengthen the imperial organisation. But it inconvenienced the nobles who opposed and resisted its implementation. In many regions of the Mughal Empire it was left unimplemented in the 17th century. Alongside the local elites (*zamindars*) and the nobles, the village and *qasba* based *madad-i ma'ash* holders (men of learning, who were given revenue free grants of land by the Mughal Emperors) and a very large numbers of lower level officials drawn from various regional and local communities, were all integrated intimately into the framework of the Empire. The *madad-i ma'ash* holdings were scattered in the *zamindaris*. They were meant to establish pockets of influence for the Empire in the far flung regions of the countryside. The emperors were of the view that the *madad-i ma'ash* grantees would keep in check the power of the recalcitrant *zamindars* and thereby aid in balancing the social and political groups that constituted the base of the Empire.

According to Alam, the Mughal decline in the early 18th century has to be seen in the inability of the state to maintain its policy of checks and balances between the *zamindars*, *jagirdars*, *madad-i ma'ash* holders and the local indigenous elements, like the *shaikhzada*s in Awadh. In the early 18th century, there was a thrust of the nobles towards independent political alignments with the *zamindars* in order to carve out their own fortunes. Alongside there was an attempt between the various co-sharers of Mughal power (the *zamindars*, *madad-i ma'ash* holders, etc.) to encroach on each other's rights and territorial jurisdictions. These developments were not entirely incompatible with what happened earlier. But in the hey-day of the Empire these tensions had been contained. This was achieved at times by the use of military force and at other times by balancing out the power of one social group by settling another in the vicinity (e.g., the distribution of the *madad-i ma'ash* grantees in and around the *zamindaris* of Awadh).

Alam's major concern is to analyze what triggered off the imbalancing of the social and political equilibrium in the early 18th century. In other words, what caused the Mughal edifice to collapse in the early 18th century? He is of the view that the late 17th and early 18th century, at least in the Awadh and Punjab regions, registered unmistakable economic growth. This is in sharp contrast to the more generalised argument about the early 18th century being in the throes of a financial crisis that was postulated by Satish Chandra and others. Social groups that had hitherto shared Mughal power and contributed to the political stability of the Empire, now began to take advantage of the economic boom in their regions. Many of them amassed wealth which helped them to increase their power to encroach on the rights and privileges of others. The political edifice of the Empire was bound to suffer in the face of these developments.

Muzaffar Alam concludes that the decline of the Mughal Empire was manifested both in Awadh and the Punjab in a kind of political transformation and in the emergence and configuration of the elements of a new *subadari*. The genesis for the emergence of independent regional units was present in both the provinces. But in Punjab it ended in chaos, while Awadh witnessed a stable dynastic rule.

### 35.3.2 Contours of Regional Polities

Muzaffar Alam's plea to understand the complexities of Mughal decline by looking at regional development in the early 18th century India has been followed up by

tan Singh. His book *Region and Empire* takes a new look at the regional history of the Mughal North India. The history of the Mughal suba of Punjab is reconstructed in the context of both the Mughal politics as well as the wider political changes that swept through the contemporary West Asian world. He argues that the Mughal administrative infrastructure no doubt linked the region to the Mughal administrative core. Yet, this conventional form of integration had its limitations. For local society and polity were subjected to a variety of stresses and the administrative system responded by transgressing the formal administrative divisions and sub-divisions of the Mughal governmental system. This was true both of the general administration where pragmatic considerations led to flexibility in the creation of local offices and the kind of function they performed, as well as of revenue administration. In the revenue administration, with the passage of time, certain norms and conventions evolved which along with formal rules and regulations contributed to the stability of the Mughal Empire.

However, by the late 17th century the silting of the river Indus had adversely affected the riverine traffic of Punjab. Its most serious implication was the gradual erosion of the highly commercialised Punjab economy. The political upheavals in contemporary Turkey, fall of Qandahar to the Shah of Iran and the Mughal attempt to recover it virtually brought overland traffic to a standstill. This development coincided with the Yusufzai uprising (1667) in North-West Punjab and the Afridi rebellion in 1678. Singh argues that these political disturbances had grave social and economic consequences for Punjab: they disrupted trade and thereby gradually eroded the economy which was based on a commercialised agrarian sector.

The loosening of Punjab's socio-economic structure led to social unrest in Punjab. However, Singh contends that since the benefits of trade and commerce had been unequally distributed in the region, the discomforts caused by the decline of trade varied in different areas of the Punjab. Thus the areas most closely associated with the Sikh rebellion were those that were also among the most commercialised and therefore most easily affected by economic regression. Thus, he concludes, the social unrest which eventually led to the dissociation of Punjab from the Empire was the product of long term processes. These processes had silently and steadily been at work in the region even before the political weakening of Empire had gained momentum in the 18th century.

It is here that Singh's study adds a new dimension to the already mooted question of the 'crisis of Empire'. For contrary to Muzaffar Alam's study of Mughal Awadh and Punjab, which traces the dissociation of these regions from the Mughal Empire from the early 18th century, Singh sees the process at work in the hey day of the Empire. Thus, looking at the disintegration of the Empire from the point of view of the regional history of Punjab different picture emerges. Not only did different subas of the Empire dissociate from it for different reasons, but very often the dissociations were caused by political, social and economic developments beyond the purview of the Mughal Empire.

### 35.3.3 An Overview

It is difficult to find a single explanation commonly applicable to the problems of the Mughal Empire in all its regions and provinces. For similar reasons it is difficult to accept a view of Mughal decline which applies uniformly to all parts of the Mughal Empire. The Mughal Empire at best represented a consensus of both the centre and the peripheries. In the early 18th century, it was this consensus which was disturbed. Different peripheries that had constituted the Empire followed their own different paths of developments. The eighteenth century regional histories thus indicate the endeavour to make use of the possibilities for growth within existing social structures.

Evidently the regional history perspective on Mughal decline negates the application of one general theory to explain Mughal collapse all over India. For the Mughal Empire, at best, represented a consensus between the centre and the peripheries. The peripheries were integrated to the Mughal core not merely administratively. For there was an economic and cultural assimilation between the conqueror and the vanquished. It was on certain shared economic and cultural spaces that the Mughal state structure rested.

Regions, held together by these heterogenous linkages to the Mughal core, were bound to be vulnerable to the kinds of social, economic and cultural changes that swept through 17th century Mughal India. Different regions were affected in different ways. While in some regions links with the Mughal core were severed, in others they were retained. It was logical that the different regions followed different paths of dissociation from the Mughal Empire. Mughal decline was thus much more complex than what the historians subscribing to the Mughal-Centric approach would have us believe.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) What explanation does Muzaffar Alam offer for the decline of the Mughal Empire?

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- 2) What impact did the economy of Punjab receive as a result of the silting of Indus towards the close of the 17th century?

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**35.4 LET US SUM UP**

The decline of the Mughal Empire, it was initially believed, was the consequence of an administrative maladjustment due to which erupted a crisis in the jagir system, which ultimately led to the emergence of regional powers. Subsequently, the enquiries pertaining to the economic infrastructure of the Mughal empire point towards an agrarian crisis at the close of the seventeenth century, giving rise to rebellions by the Jats, Satnamis and Sikhs. To accept, however, one single explanation for the Mughal decline—an explanation that will cover all regions and provinces of the Empire—is a difficult proposition. In the early eighteenth century, probably the delicate equilibrium that had so long sustained the edifice of the Mughal system got disturbed. What followed then was a process of readjustment of all the diverse constituents of this system, the result being a dislocation of the Empire and the emergence of regional powers.

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**35.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) He says that the paucity of jagirs for distribution among the new nobility created a disorder. Details can be seen in Sub-sec. 35.2.1.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 35.2.2.
- 3) See Sub-sec. 35.2.3

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) He is of the view that the decline was the consequence of the inability of the Mughal state to maintain checks and balances between the various beneficiaries of the Empire, e.g., zamindars, jagirdars, shalkhzadas, etc. For details, see Sub-sec. 35.3.1.
- 2) See Sub-sec. 35.3.2.

# UNIT 36 RISE OF REGIONAL POWERS

## Structure

- 36.0 Objectives
- 36.1 Introduction
- 36.2 Historical Perspective of the Emergence of Regional Polities
- 36.3 Successor States
  - 36.3.1 Awadh
  - 36.3.2 Bengal
  - 36.3.3 Hyderabad
- 36.4 The New States
  - 36.4.1 The Marathas
  - 36.4.2 Punjab
  - 36.4.3 The Jat State
- 36.5 Independent Kingdoms
  - 36.5.1 Mysore
  - 36.5.2 The Rajputs
  - 36.5.3 Kerala
- 36.6 Nature of Regional Polities
- 36.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 36.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

## 36.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will be introduced to :

- the developments preceding the formation of regional polities;
- the different types of states that emerged following the collapse of the Mughal imperial authority and
- the functioning and failure of the regional powers.

## 36.1 INTRODUCTION

We have explained in the previous Unit that why and how the Mughal Empire collapsed during the first half of the 18th century. Subsequent to the decline of the Mughal Empire, a significant development of this period was the emergence of independent regional states. However, there has been a tendency in the writings of contemporary Persian and the early British historians to overlook this development by overprojecting the decline of the Mughal Empire and by glorifying the establishment of the British rule. Contemporary researches on the 18th century have drawn our attention to the need of studying the 18th century India on its own, not from the perspective of the decline of imperial authority or the beginning of colonial rule. Keeping this in view, an attempt has been made in this Unit to familiarize you with the various facets of the emergence of the regional polities during the first half of the 18th century.

## 36.2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POLITIES

In our discussion on the Mughal administrative system (Block 4), we have explained the mechanism of the provincial administration under the Mughals. In the context of the development of independent regional polities, what is important to understand is the dynamics of the Mughal provincial polity during 18th century.

This would help us identify the trend and process of the emergence of regional powers. The Mughal administration was centralised in character. Its success was heavily dependent on the power and ability of the Emperor to subdue the nobles, zamindars, jagirdars and provincial officials. In fact, there was balance and coordination of interests and aspirations between the Emperor (who was always in a dominant position) and others. This position started changing, it is said, with the death of Aurangzeb. For various reasons, the authority of the Mughal Emperor got emasculated.

The **diwan** (head of the revenue administration) and the **nazim** (the executive head) were the two most important functionaries. Both of them were directly appointed by the Emperor and through them the imperial control over the provinces was retained. Besides, there were other officials like **amils**, **faujders**, **kotwals**, etc. who were also appointed by the Emperor. The provincial governors also depended on the goodwill of the Emperor to continue in their job. Thus, through the control over appointment, the Emperor indirectly controlled the provincial administration.

Unfortunately, the central administration was crippled by financial crisis and factional rivalry among the nobles. The Emperor was not in a position to prevent the crisis. It failed to provide the required protection to the provincial governors. As a result, the provincial governors engaged themselves at the beginning of the 18th century to develop an independent base of power. Some of its indications were that the local appointments were made by them without the prior permission from the Emperor, and attempts were made to establish dynastic rule in the provinces. What happened during this period was that, except the theoretical allegiance to the Mughal Emperor in the form of sending tributes, the provincial governors virtually established their independent authority over the provinces. Even the autonomous states in Deccan, Rajputana, etc. who were not directly under the Mughals but acknowledged the authority of the Mughals also cut off their ties with the Empire. The trend of making independent authority is clearly visible in different regions whether directly under the Mughals or not in the first half of the 18th century. The states that emerged during this period can be classified into three broad categories:

- the states which broke away from the Mughal Empire;
- the new states set up by the rebels against the Mughals; and
- the independent states.

In the following sections we will discuss in brief about these states.

### 36.3 SUCCESSOR STATES

Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad fall in the category of successor states. All these three provinces were directly under the control of the Mughal administration. Though the sovereignty of the Mughal Emperor was not challenged, the establishment of practically independent and hereditary authority by the governors and subordination of all offices within the region to the governors showed the emergence of autonomous polity in these regions. A new political order came into existence within the broader Mughal institutional framework.

#### 36.3.1 Awadh

Sa'adat Khan became the **subadar** of Awadh in 1722. His aspiration was to play an important role in the imperial politics. Having failed in that design, he devoted himself to the task of making Awadh an independent centre of power. The Mughal decline provided him the desired opportunity to establish his own authority in the region. The major challenge that he faced after becoming the **subadar** was the rebellion of local chieftains and **rajahs** of Awadh. In order to consolidate his position he adopted the following measures:

- suppression of rebellious local **zamindars** and chieftains;
- curtailment of the authority of the **madad-i-maash** grantees;
- systematizing revenue collection; and
- negotiation with some local **zamindars**.

in appointing local officials, he considered only their personal loyalty to him. His motive became more clear when he nominated his son-in-law, Safdar Jang, as deputy governor of the province without the prior consent of the Emperor.

After Sa'adat Khan, Safdar Jang pursued the same path so that the working of provincial administration no longer depended on the will of the Emperor. Even sending of revenues to Delhi became irregular. Semblance of allegiance to the Mughal Emperor was still maintained, but between the years 1739 and 1764 Awadh emerged virtually as an autonomous state. Safdar Jang extended his control over the Gangetic plains and appropriated the forts of Rohtas, Chunar and also the subadari of Allahabad. The office of the imperial diwan was abolished. His successor Shujauddaula also tried to consolidate the basis of autonomous political system in Awadh. In the process of establishment of autonomous state, the most remarkable development was the promotion and prosperity of a new group of gentry who owed their allegiance to the Awadh ruler and not to the Mughal Emperor.

### 36.3.2 Bengal

In Bengal the process of autonomy was started by Murshid Quli Khan. He was first appointed as diwan but, later on, his success in revenue administration, and the uncertainty after the death of Aurangzeb, paved his way for the subadari of Bengal. Murshid Quli abolished the separate offices of the diwan and the nazim and combined them into one. His initial concern was revenue administration and, in order to streamline it, he took the following measures:

- elimination of small intermediary zamindars;
- expelling rebellious zamindars and jagirdars to the frontier regions of Orissa;
- encouraging big zamindars who assumed the responsibilities of revenue collection and payment; and
- enlarging the scope and extent of the khalsa lands.

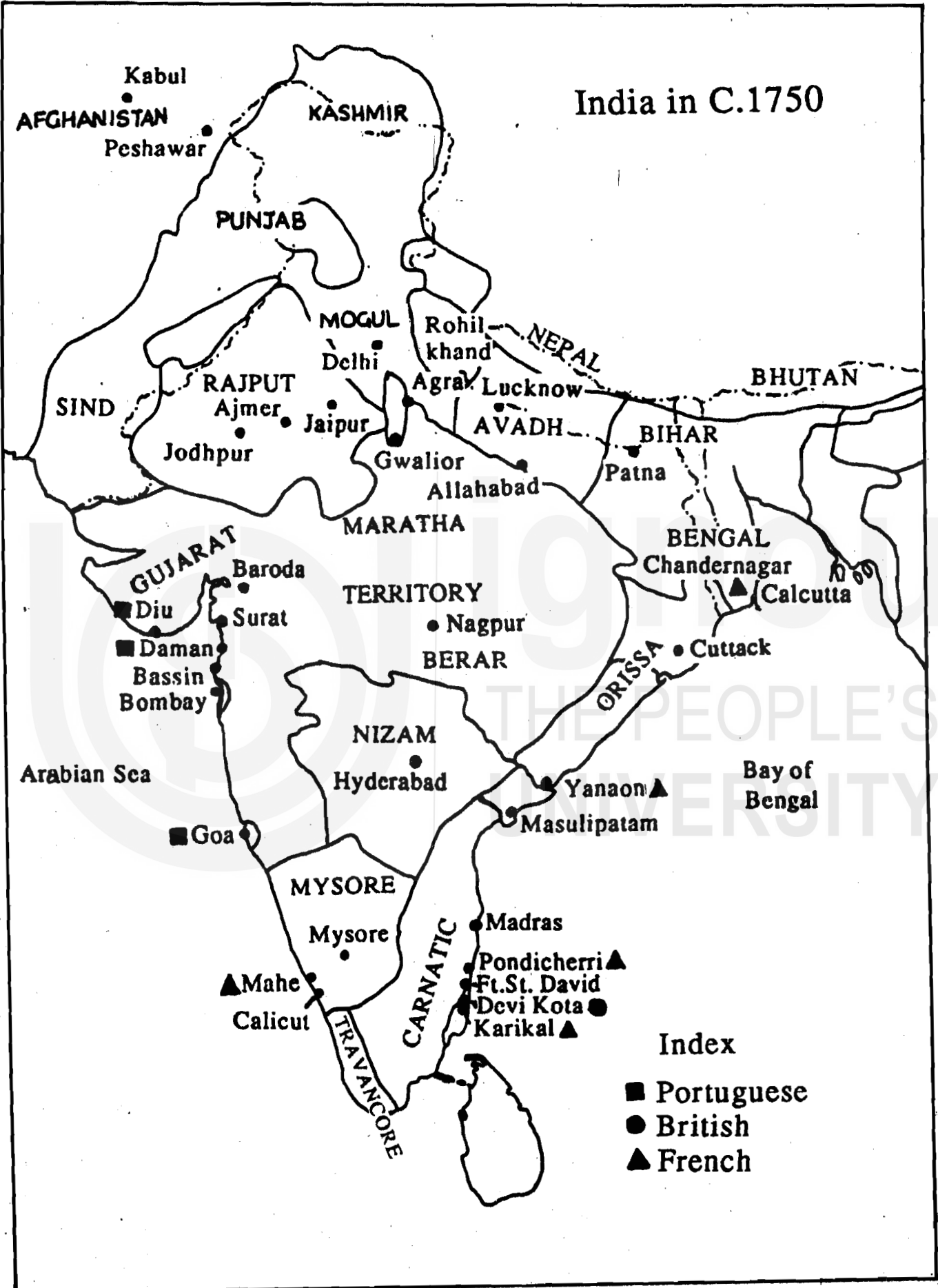
By his measures, Murshid Quli encouraged the zamindars to emerge as a powerful political force in the province. Similarly, moneyed and commercial classes got encouragement from the Nawab and established their importance in local polity. All these were clear indications of Murshid Quli's desire to establish Bengal as his domain. He also nominated his daughter's son Sarfaraz as his successor. This set the tradition of a dynastic rule in Bengal. Sarfaraz was overthrown by his father Shujauddin Muhammad Khan. Shujauddin followed the system developed by Murshid Quli and tried to maintain ties of loyalty with different local power groups. His link with Delhi was basically confined to the sending of tributes. The next ruler Alivardi Khan assumed power through coup and killed Sarfaraz Khan. Alivardi's reign showed further development towards autonomy. Major appointments at the provincial level were made by him without any reference to the Mughal ruler. He appointed his own loyalists as deputy Nawabs at Patna, Cuttack and Dhaka. He recruited a large number of Hindus in revenue administration and organised a strong military force. The flow of tribute to Delhi became irregular. Thus, by Alivardi's time, an administrative system developed in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa which reduced ties with the imperial court in Delhi, and for all practical purposes an independent state emerged in Eastern India.

### 36.3.3 Hyderabad

As in Awadh and Bengal, so in Hyderabad also the weakening of the imperial rule provided the opportunity to the subadar of Deccan to lay the basis for an autonomous state. Nizamulmulk established his control over Hyderabad by removing the officials appointed by the Mughals and installed his own men. He assumed the right of making treaties, wars, granting mansabs, titles, etc. The Mughal authority was reduced to a symbolic reading of khutba. Reform of the revenue system, subduing of zamindars and tolerance towards Hindus were some of his important measures. A network of intermediary interests on land was allowed to flourish in Hyderabad and this had strong bearing on the state polity. Bankers, moneylenders and military commanders had important role to play in maintaining political balance because they provided the essential financial and military service. Nizamulmulk's reign thus showed the emergence of an independent state in Hyderabad with nominal allegiance to the emperor. His successors faced tough challenges from the



# India in C.1750



Marathas and the European Companies, and failed to maintain the autonomy of the state for long.

## 36.4 THE NEW STATES

The second group of regional states were the 'new states' which came into existence as a protest against the Mughals.

### 36.4.1 The Marathas

Among the various provincial states that emerged during this period, the most prominent was the Maratha state. The rise of the Marathas was both a regional reaction against Mughal centralisation as well as a manifestation of the upward mobility of certain classes and castes. The Mughals never had proper control over the heartland of the Marathas. During the period of Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath the office of the Peshwa became very powerful and the Maratha state system attained the status of a dominant expansionist state. Starting from Balaji Vishwanath to the reign of Balaji Rao, the Maratha power reached its zenith and the Marathas spread in every directions South, East, North and Central India. The Third Battle of Panipat in 1761 between the Afghans and the Marathas was major setback for the Marathas and their victory march was halted by the success of the Afghans in this battle. So far as the administration is concerned, there were non-regulation and regulation areas. In non-regulated areas, the existing zamindars and chieftains were allowed to run the administration, but they had to pay tribute regularly to the Peshwa. In regulation areas direct control of the Marathas was established. In these areas a system of revenue assessment and management was developed of which the most important was the watan system. The watandars were holders of hereditary rights in land, whose rights vested not in an individual incumbent but in a brotherhood of patrilineal relatives (for further details, see Unit 19). The Marathas adopted some parts of the Mughal administrative system, but their major thrust was on extraction of surplus. In the absence of well-defined provincial authority, they failed to consolidate their influence.

### 36.4.2 Punjab

The development in Punjab was different from other regions. Zakaria Khan, the governor of Lahore, had tried to establish an independent political system in Punjab. But he failed mainly because of the struggle of the Sikhs for independent political authority. The Sikh movement, which was started by Guru Nanak to reform the religious beliefs and strengthen the Sikh brotherhood, changed into a political movement during the 18th century. The Sikhs organised themselves into numerous small and highly mobile jathas and posed serious challenge to the Mughal imperial authority. The foreign invasion (Persian and Afghan), the Maratha incursion and internal rivalry in the provincial administration created a very fluid situation in Punjab which helped the Sikhs to consolidate their base. In the second half of the 18th century, the different Sikh groups had regrouped themselves into 12 larger regional confederacies or misls under the leadership of various local chieftains. The process towards the establishment of an autonomous state became complete only under Ranjit Singh at the beginning of the 19th century.

### 36.4.3 The Jat State

The Jats were an agriculturist caste inhabiting the Delhi-Agra region. Among the different agrarian revolts that the Mughal Empire faced in the second half of the 17th century, the revolt of the Jats was a significant one. Following the contemporary trend, the Jats also tried to establish an autonomous zone of their control. Churaman and Badan Singh took the initiative but it was Suraj Mal who consolidated the Jat state at Bharatpur during 1756-1763. The state was expanded in the east upto the boundaries of the Ganga, in the south the Chambal, in the north Delhi and in the west Agra. The state was feudal by nature and it was the zamindars who were in control of both administrative and revenue powers. The state did not continue for long after the death of Suraj Mal.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Match the following:

- |                        |               |
|------------------------|---------------|
| i) Sa'adat Khan        | iii) Bengal   |
| ii) Zakaria Khan       | iv) Hyderabad |
| iii) Murshid Quli Khan | v) Bharatpur  |
| iv) Suraj Mal          | i) Awadh      |
| v) Nizamulmulk         | ii) Punjab    |

2) Define the following:

**Jathas** .....

.....

**Misls** .....

.....

**Watandars** .....

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**36.5 INDEPENDENT KINGDOMS**

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The third category of states were independent kingdoms. These states emerged primarily taking the advantage of the destabilization of imperial control over the provinces.

**36.5.1 Mysore**

The kingdom of Mysore was located to the south of Hyderabad.

Unlike Hyderabad, Mysore was not under direct control of the Mughals. Mysore was transformed from a viceroyalty of the Vijaynagar Empire into an autonomous state by the Wodeyar dynasty. The Wodeyar rulers were overthrown to strengthen the autonomy of the state by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan during the 18th century. The major threat before Mysore initially came from the Marathas on the one hand and that of Hyderabad and Karnatak on the other, while the English were waiting to take advantage of the situation. Starting his career as a junior officer in the Mysore army, Haidar Ali became its brilliant commander. He rightly realized the importance of modern army and accordingly tried to modernize the Mysore army after the European manner. With the help of the French, he tried to strengthen organizational discipline in the army. By 1761, he was able to overthrow the real power behind the Mysore throne, the minister Nunjaraj. He extended the boundaries of the Mysore state and incurred the hostilities of the Marathas, Hyderabad and the English. In 1769, the British forces were defeated by Haidar Ali. But the conflict continued. After his death in 1782, his son Tipu Sultan carried on the task of his father till the end of the 18th century.

**36.5.2 The Rajputs**

The Rajput rulers also tried to establish independent political authority. They pursued the policy of expansion by grabbing the territory of their neighbours. The principal Rajput states like Mewar, Marwar and Amber formed a league against the Mughals. But the internal rivalry among the Rajputs for power weakened their authority. Most prominent among the Rajput rulers were Ajit Singh of Jodhpur and Jai Singh of Jaipur.

**36.5.3 Kerala**

Kerala was divided into small principalities under the control of local chieftains and **raj**as at the beginning of the 18th century. Mughal control was not visible in this area. But by the second half of the 18th century, all small principalities had been subdued by the important states of Kerala, Cochin, Travancore and Calicut. The expansion of Mysore under Haidar Ali put Kerala in a very difficult situation. Haidar Ali in fact annexed Malabar and Calicut. Travancore, which escaped from Haidar Ali's invasion, was the most prominent one. It was king Martanda Varma

who extended the boundaries of Travancore from Kanya Kumari to Cochin. He tried to organise the army along Western Model, and took various administrative measures to develop the state.

### 36.6 NATURE OF REGIONAL POLITIES

There were differences in the way the autonomous political system developed in different regions. In some areas, the Mughal governors established their independent authority in the regions under their control (as it happened in Bengal, Awadh and Hyderabad). The formation of the Maratha, Sikh and Jat states was the outcome of their struggle against the Mughal imperial control. Whereas Mysore, Rajputana and Kerala were already semi-independent. But the link that they had maintained with the Mughal Empire was broken in the wake of the decline of the Mughal Empire. In whatever manner they emerged, each state tried to develop its own administrative mechanism. Take for example Hyderabad and Mysore. Both were situated in the South, but Hyderabad was directly under the Mughals and Mysore was under the control of the Wodeyar rulers. In both the states a new autonomous administrative system developed, but their functioning was different. In Mysore, emphasis was given to strengthen the army organization and to augment the financial resources of the state curbing the power and influence of the local chieftains. But, in Hyderabad, the local chieftains were allowed to remain intact. There were also differences in army reorganization and in mobilising revenue for the state. Similarly, other regional powers developed their own institutional framework and various local linkages to run the administration. However, in spite of these differences one finds some common characteristics in the functioning of regional powers in the 18th century.

The independent political system that emerged in the provinces continued to maintain ties with the Mughal imperial authority. Though the Mughal Emperor lost its earlier control over the provincial administration, its importance as an umbrella over the provincial authority still remained. The newly emerged regional powers acknowledged this importance. Even rebel chieftains of the Marathas and Sikhs sometimes recognised the Emperor as the supreme authority. Each state no doubt reorganised its administrative set up and army according to its requirements, but the Mughal administrative system was often adapted by these states. In the states like Bengal, Awadh and Hyderabad, where the Mughal governors had established their independent authority, it was quite natural to follow the Mughal tradition. Even states like that of the Marathas adopted Mughal pattern of administration. However, it should be noted in this context that though there was continuity of some Mughal institutions, the Mughal political system did not survive. The polity that emerged in the early 18th century was regional in character. There are no indications that these regional polities were different from the Mughal one in so far as the basic characteristics are concerned.

The regional polity that emerged in the 18th century worked with the collaborative support of the different local groups like the **zamindars**, merchants, local nobles, and chieftains. With the weakening of the imperial authority and the finances in the 18th century, the merchants played a crucial role in the emergence and functioning of the regional polity. They provided the necessary financial support to the nobles and rulers and naturally had important say in the administration. Take for example the Agarwal bankers of Banaras who controlled the revenue matters. Similarly, the house of the Jagat Seths in Bengal played a decisive role in the local power politics. Like the merchants, the **zamindars** and local chieftains in the absence of central security emerged as protectors of the local people. In their respective areas of control, the **zamindars** ruled over both revenue as well as judicial administration. The common people had to depend on the mercy and benevolence of these **zamindars**. Naturally in the newly-formed regional polity these **zamindars** had strong local clout. The provincial rulers had to take care of these various local interests in order to maintain themselves. There were exceptions, too. For example, the Mysore rulers did not recognize the local chieftains; through their effective control over army and revenue administration they completely sidelined them. But, generally in the 18th century regional polity these local groups often played a decisive role in administration. This can be regarded as one of the weaknesses of the regional polity. This shows that the provincial rulers failed to develop a system based on sound financial administrative and military organization. So they had to

depend on the cooperation and collaboration of the local groups. This was a major administrative flaw in the provincial polity and to some extent this was one reason for the failure of developing a stable polity. Another drawback was the constant warfare among the different neighbouring regional powers. Particularly the Marathas and the Southern states were constantly in the race for expanding their territorial boundaries. This generated tensions among the regional powers and none could ultimately dominate over the other. Disunity among the regional powers paved the way for the external forces to establish their dominance over India.

**Check your Progress 2**

- 1) Analyse the pattern of the emergence of autonomous kingdoms during the early 18th century.

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- 2) Critically examine the nature of regional politics in the early 18th century.

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**36.7 LET US SUM UP**

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In this Unit, the focus was on the emergence of regional polities during the first half of the 18th century. In order to understand this process, we first discussed the situation arising out of the collapse of the Mughal Empire. This was followed by a discussion on the three categories of the states, i.e., the successor states, the new states and the independent kingdoms. These states established their independent authority, but at the same time they did not completely sever their linkages with the Mughal Empire. Obviously, then, these regional powers could not have developed a new political system of all-India level which could replace the Mughal imperial system. This flaw paved the way for takeover by the European powers.

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**36.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) i) 4 ii) 5 iii) 1 iv) 3 v) 2
- 2) See Sub-sec 36.4.1, 36.4.2

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) Read Sections 36.2, 36.3, 36.4, 36.5. Discuss that the pattern of the emergence of regional polities was not uniform: some were successor states and some emerged entirely independently.
- 2) Read Section 36.6. Discuss the characteristic features of the regional polities and analyse how far it resembled the 'Centre' in character.

## UNIT 37 POTENTIALITIES OF CAPITALISTIC DEVELOPMENT

This is the last Unit of your present course (EHI-04). By now you must have become intimately familiar with the many facets of Medieval India during the 16th-18th centuries. Here we do not intend to give a resume of the subject-matter of the foregoing Blocks. Instead, we will raise an important question and try to respond to it. We have dispensed with the formal mode of structuring in this Unit so that you read the entire argument in a flow. The question we are going to address here relates to the economic structure of Medieval India.

It has often been asked why India failed to industrialise and evolve a capitalistic economy before the British conquest. In other words, was there any potentiality of emergence of capitalism in Mughal India along the lines of what happened in Europe? This query was casually probed by W.H. Moreland (*India at the Death of Akbar*, London, 1920; *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, London, 1923) and Brij Narain (*Indian Economic Life, Past and Present*, Lahore, 1929). However, since 1960s, there has been a regular debate on this question beginning with Morris D. Morris (1963) and Toru Matsui and followed by Bipan Chandra and Tapan Raychaudhuri (1968). But their views largely dwell on the 19th century India. It will, however, be more fruitful to us if we focus attention on the status of the Mughal economy. A pioneering enquiry on these lines was conducted by Irfan Habib in 'Potentialities of Capitalistic development in the Economy of Mughal India' (presented at the International Economic History Congress, Bloomington, 1968 and published in *Enquiry*, New Series, Vol. III, No. 3, 1971, pp. 1-56). This was followed by A. I. Chicherov's *India: Economic Development in the 16th-18th centuries*, Moscow, 1971. (You may also consult A. Jan Qaisar's, "The Role of Brokers in Medieval India" published in *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. I, No. 2, Sept. 1974, pp. 240-46).

In fact what we are concerned for this Unit is not why a capitalist structure did not emerge during the Mughal period; our query is whether we can see signals of capitalist development within the Mughal economy. Significantly Europe did not possess capitalist economy in the 17th century. Capitalism started emerging, for example in England, from the second half of the 18th century only. It was, by and large, merchant capitalism that prevailed in England at this time, not industrial capitalism.

To begin with, we must be clear about what do we understand by the term capitalism. Thereafter we may begin to investigate the presence or absence of its features in Mughal economy. Let us list the most important features of early capitalism:

- i) Control of capital over production-processes;
- ii) Money or market relations;
- iii) "Immense accumulation of commodities" (Karl Marx); and
- iv) Breakthrough in production-technology.

That the merchants of Medieval India possessed considerable capital cannot be questioned. Estimates of their wealth come from European records. We are told that in 1663 some merchants of Surat owned more than 5 or 6 million rupees. Mulla Abdul Ghafur of Surat had assets worth 8 million rupees. He also owned twenty ships (between 300 and 800 tons each). The English factors testify that the volume of his trading transactions was no less than that of their company. Another Surat merchant Virji Vora is reported to have held an "estate" of the value of 8 million rupees. Manrique (1630) was amazed by the immense wealth of the merchants of Agra; he saw money piled up in some merchants' houses that "looked like grain heaps".

Besides, the merchants put their money into commercial circulation. The wealth of the non-mercantile groups too was invested in trading ventures. This included the Mughal Emperors, royal ladies, princes and nobles—many of whom had their own

ships. True, their investment was less than that of the merchants, but the important point here is that their involvement increased the size of "money-market" in its own way.

The system of credit and banking in Mughal India was well developed. You have already read about the role and functions of the *sarraf* who acted as a banker remitting money and issuing bills of exchange called *hundi* (Block 6, Unit 24). The *sarraf* also discounted the *hundis* of merchants thus enlarging the volume of money for commerce. Another well-developed financial practice related to the insurance of goods in transit (both inland and marine). Moreover, institutions of money lending (and interest), for commercial purposes including *bottomry* and *respondentia*, were also prevalent. Clearly then the basic financial and economic institutions were in operation in good measure during the 17th and 18th centuries. This may have put the Medieval economy on to the road to capitalism.

Again, commodity production was taking place on a vast scale, especially of textiles, saltpetre, indigo, etc. Procurement of these commodities was made easier both for the Indian and foreign merchants by the institution of brokery. Means of transport, too were fairly well-established keeping in view the constraints of Medieval times.

True capitalist relations may develop only when capital would dominate and control large areas of production process. This is the principal difference between industrial and merchant capital. The latter is not directly involved with manufacture. In other words, production was not controlled by merchants: it was carried out by independent artisans who owned the tools, invested their money in buying raw material, worked at their respective homes (Domestic Craft System), owned the finished goods and sold the latter at the market. Capitalism destroys all these features, turning the independent artisans into wage-workers. As an upshot, industrial capital takes over gradually the means of production and controls the entire system.

But the changeover from merchant to industrial capitalism was not abrupt or sudden. There was a transitory stage that arose within merchant capitalism itself. It is called putting-out system (you have already read about it in Block 6, Unit 22). Therefore, it is pertinent to examine the nature and extent of this transitory phase in Medieval India, that is, the progressive control of labour and production by capital.

The penetration of merchant capital into the existing artisan-level mode of production could occur through the putting-out system (*dadni*) which seems to have been quite an established practice, though on a small scale, even prior to the 17th century. The brokers come into the picture because the advances to the primary producers by the merchants were made through them. Let us first set out the economic structure of the putting-out system. The Indian economy during the 17th century was a sellers' (i.e., producers') market. There was tremendous demand and the large number of competitive buyers flooding the market. Thus, from the merchants' point of view, especially of those engaged in foreign trade, the putting-out system excluded his rivals and secured him timely delivery of stipulated quantity of commodity in accordance with his specifications at previously agreed rates. On the other hand, the primary producer accepted advances since he had to cope with extensive orders for which he may not have adequate money to buy raw materials. (The next stage was the supply of raw materials, too). Thus, the putting-out system rendered economic services to both the merchant and the artisan. In this context, the degree of penetration of merchant capital into the production-process through the putting-out system could be assessed by examining whether the merchant advanced cash or raw materials (or both) and the tools of production to the artisan. Taking the textile industry, we have adequate evidence for advance being given in cash to infer that it was an established practice. But evidence for raw material is quite insufficient to show its wide use, while that for instruments of production is almost negligible.

Here it must be pointed out that the need for giving raw material (yarn) to the weavers arose from the consideration that the yarn obtained by weavers themselves was often of inferior quality, even when granted cash advance. It appears that some profit accrued to the weaver when he himself purchased yarn or raw silk of a quality questionable from the merchants' point of view. Thus it may be reasonably

assumed that the weaver did not always welcome the supply of raw material from the merchant as this possibly wiped off the little "cut" they could otherwise get. This partly explains the scarcity of data on this particular practice, that is, the advance being made in raw material.

That the predominant form of the putting-out system was cash-advance is evident from what Streyntsham Master says about Bengal in the later decades of the 17th century;

"The most proper season for giving out moneys for cossuss; Mulmullas etc., made in and about Dacca is the month of January.

Dellolls or Broackers.....take four monethes time for its delivery, and within sic monethes or thereabouts doe usually bring in the same browne (unbleached, as it comes from the weavers.

The said Broackers, having tooke money, deliver it to the Picars (Paikar) who carry it from Towne to towne, and deliver it to weavers....."

Here Master does not mention at all the practice of giving yarn to the weavers. Other accounts also point to the same conclusion. We find only one reference in the English factory records to this practice, but that is in connection with raw silk. The reason assigned was that the weavers, out of poverty, could not buy raw silk of the requisite quality.

The same could be said about Gujarat with the difference that probably this practice was adopted on a comparatively large scale than in Bengal. But there is no evidence to convince us that it ever acquired a very dominant form of the putting-out system there. Even Chicherov, despite his strong advocacy of the development of capitalistic relations, is struck by the scarcity of data on the advancing of raw material, that is, yarn, to the weavers. He himself explains that "the supply of raw materials never posed a problem" in the rural areas because "cotton-growing, which was extraordinarily extensive and in some areas almost universal, was a typical economic-geographical feature of India; cotton could be grown on every farm or bought on the nearest market". He adds, "spinning, widespread not only in the so weavers' home but also in ordinary peasant families, created a constant and vast source of raw materials for the weaving trade". Thus, it may safely be concluded that the most distinguishing feature of the putting-out system during the 17th century was the practice of cash-advance.

From this point we can pass on to the part played by the practice of cash-advance in transforming the relations of production. Considering the prime motive of giving cash-advances to the artisan, we do not notice any distinct tendency on the part of the merchants to intervene deliberately in the production process in such a manner as to bring about a radical change in the relations of production. True, the producer was "tied" to the merchant in the sense that now he was under an obligation to fulfil his commitment, that is, to provide the merchant with the commodity produced by him in accordance with the merchant's specifications within a limited time and at an agreed price. But the artisan still retained the ownership of the tools of production and in this case raw materials, too. What really happened was that he had merely sold off his produce in return for advance payment out of his free will. There does not appear to exist any extraordinary economic compulsion (except poverty) for him to accept such orders from the merchant; nor does the latter appear to have employed non-economic coercion to compel him to enter into such a deal. Instead, the merchant had to induce the producer to accept the advance payment in his own interest. For example, in 1665 the English factors wrote from Surat:

"Calicoes are soe bought up by the Dutch etc. that we are forced to pray and pay for what we have and take it as a *courtesy* (italics ours) that the weavers will vouchsafe to receive out money 8 and 10 months beforehand, which is the only thing that ties them to us."

Here, the merchants felt obliged to the weavers for their acceptance of the advance money. But even this "tie-up" was very slender. In 1647 the English factors at Thatta wrote to Surat:

"Besides, those weavers are a company of base rougues, for, notwithstanding



wee give them money aforehand part of the yeare, and that in the time of there greatest want, yet if any pedling cloth merchant comes to buy, they leave us and worke for him, though hee gives noe money aforehand; being the ordinary base make is more facill and easy to weave then ours, with which they must take some paines."

Again, in 1622, they wrote from Broach: "wee must give outt our money beforehand, and receive the proceedes of itt att the weavers and brokers pleasure".

Thus, it is indeed incongruous and Chicherov talks of "economic bondage", "economic dependence", "physical coercion" and "merchant monopoly" with regard to the relations between the merchant and the producer during the 17th century. The artisan had merely turned into a "contract-producer" from an "independent" one. True he was no longer the owner of his produce, but he was not yet alienated from the ownership of raw material and tools of production.

As long as the artisan worked within the domestic system of craft-production, real capitalistic relations of production could not be generated. That the putting-out system did not deprive the producer of his tools and often raw material clearly indicates that the control of labour by merchant capital was indeed very weak. Until this alienation took place, commodity-production manufactory or, in other words, assemblage of large number of workers at one place at the same time for the production of the same commodity under a superior capitalist direction could not emerge. But at this stage the putting-out system itself, along with the brokers, would ultimately disappear, yielding place to new relations of production.

Nor do we find any evidence for the creation of surplus value, say, through "depression of wages", during the 17th century so that a part of the labour time could remain unpaid for. Quite obviously in the absence of the exercise of non-economic coercion by the merchants, this was not possible so long as the tools of production were retained by the artisan, working within the domestic system. Since the tools were simple and cheap to be made or purchased and no technological breakthrough was achieved rendering them costlier, beyond the means of an average artisan, the latter was not alienated from them. Here we may recall the observation of Marx:

"The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital; on the other, the immediate producers into wage-labourers."

However, we do not propose to hold that merchant capital did not exercise any influence on the organization of production. The putting-out system through which it operated did encroach on the "independent" status of the primary producer, transforming him into a "contract-worker". It also cut him off from the market—a process which was inherent in the system itself. Again, the sporadic examples of *karkhanas* maintained and the dyeing and refining "houses" erected by the foreign merchants in Gujarat and Bengal do indicate the direction of change during the latter half of the 17th century. Yet these changes were not fundamental nor so widespread as to compel us to discover in them elements which could promote real capitalistic relations. After all these were changes within the existing mode of production, wherein merchant capital had a very feeble hold over the production process. Therefore, it will be incorrect to say that merchant capital "broke through the traditional bonds of production" in 17th century India: it had only nibbled a small part of it, of not much consequence.

It is pertinent to ask why did merchant capital, operating through the putting-out system, fail to exercise any worthwhile control over labour? That the failure did not spring from a lack of its development has been examined by Irfan Habib. We have already suggested that the enlargement of demand and the flooding of the market with a large number of competitive buyers had put the primary producer in a favourable situation; the absence of any extraordinary economic compulsion or non-economic coercion left the artisan free to strike a deal with whomsoever he considered best. Another important reason was the coexistence of the independent artisan-level production with the putting-out system (which turned the artisan into a

contract labourer) probably on a scale larger than the latter or at least on equal footing. Besides, territorial and occupational mobility of the artisan was yet another factor which often may have rescued him from falling into "economic bondage" or "dependence" as a result of his poverty, on which Chicherov lays so much stress. Finally, as we have shown above, the interests of the broker and merchant did not always coincide. The former tried to seize upon an opportunity to get some irregular income through underhand mechanism: his victims were both the producer and the merchant. Thus he did not always act in a manner which could promote the interest of merchant capital; rather he worked sometimes in collusion with the artisan.

All this actually strengthens the opinion of Marx:

"The independent and predominant development of capital as merchant's capital is tantamount to the non-subjection of production to capital, and hence to capital developing on the basis of an alien social mode of production which is also independent of it. The independent development of merchant's capital, therefore, stands in inverse proportion, to the general economic development of society."

Perhaps it would not have been difficult for some merchants, especially for "broker-contractors" (middlemen merchants) who were in close proximity with the production-process, to evolve into manufacturing entrepreneurs: the examples of *karkhanas* maintained by the Mughal emperors, nobles and occasionally by the foreign companies should have served as models. But a mere change in the organization of production unaccompanied by basic changes in technology could not cut much ice.

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### SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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- Satish Chandra : **Medieval India: Society, the Jagirdari Crisis and the Village**
- Muzaffar Alam : **The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1748**
- Chetan Singh : **Region and Empire: Punjab in the 17th Century**
- Richard Barnett : **North India Between the Empires**
- Irfan Habib : 'Potentialities of the Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India, 'Enquiry' New Series, III, 3, 1971'
- Irfan Habib : **Agrarian System of Mughal India**
- Satish Chandra : **Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1707-1740**
- Athar Ali : 'The Mughal Polity—A Critique of Revisionist Approaches', **Modern Asian Studies**, No. 27, 4, 1993
- Athar Ali : **Recent Theories of 18th Century India, Indian Historical Review**, Vol. XIII, No. 1-2, 1986-87.